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CATS ON A COLD TIN ROOF

Female Identity and Language in Plays by Five Contemporary Scottish Women Playwrights

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Abstract

Cats on a Cold Tin Roof: Female Identity and Language in Plays by Five Contemporary Scottish Women Playwrights concentrates on investigation into the main preoccupations of five Scottish women playwrights in the last twenty years, with an emphasis on the ways in which they deal with the issues of gender identity.

The study examines fifteen plays by five very different women authors in the context of modern feminist literary analysis. The main objective of the study is to show how Sue Glover, Liz Lochhead, Marcella Evaristi, Sharman Macdonald and Rona Munro - having come from different experiential perspectives - used recurring themes, imagery and discursive modes in exploring female identity.

A further objective of the study is to open up and encourage new avenues for exploring female identity in the work of Scottish women playwrights. It also sets out to identify the common themes and imagery shared by these authors, and the ways in which they are expressed in language.

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But where, woman walking above your station, is it you want to go to, get to, accomplish, communicate? Can't you be amply satisfied with such pain, such babies, such balancing? No. No. There's a blood-flecked urge to go even a step further.

Above the laughter, above the miseries, above the clatter of glasses and the cries of children I hear a voice saying: Isn't there some statement you'd like to make? Anything noted while alive? Anything felt, seen, heard, done? You are here. You're having your turn.

From Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals by Elizabeth Smart (London: Paladin/Grafton, 1991)

Chapter One

Man's Language, Woman's Meaning: Introduction to Female

Identity and Language in the Work of Five Scottish Women

Playwrights

Do women and men talk differently? Jennifer Coates has made this question into a line-opener of the introductory chapter to her 1993 edition of *Women, Men and Language*,¹ in which she explores gender differences in language practice from the sociolinguistic viewpoint. In this book, Coates does not merely aim to establish that women and men talk differently, she attempts to show *how* and *why* they do so. In order to prove her hypothesis, she provides an opulent account of historical background from folklinguistic, grammar, anthropologic and dialectologic perspectives, as well as a number of quantitative studies which concentrate on examples from English speaking communities.

The issue of female vs. male language has often plagued linguists, sociolinguists, dialectologists, social psychologists and last but not least literary theorists, whether they are feminist or not. Indeed, it makes an interesting subject and an issue around which theoretical battles have been waged, and often lost, in the course of the past several decades. Most of the approaches have their starting point in perceiving differences in language use as either biologically or socially based. Furthermore, the distinction between two language modes - spoken and written - has often been turned into a gradation between written (grammatical, standardised) language as superior to spoken (ungrammatical, nonstandard) language, with the consequence that the written language was considered a norm.

The purpose of this study is not to enter the ongoing debate about whether or not women and men use language in different ways. Neither is its intention to ponder upon the impossibility for a woman artist to use existing language forms and the need for the creation of other language forms which might be more suitable for expression of her experiences. Although both ideas will be mentioned in the course of the analysis, the main interest remains with the exploration of the ways in which language can be used in the exploration of female identity. For this purpose, the hypotheses of several renowned feminist theorists, such as Luce Irigaray, Dale Spender and Sheila Rowbotham, as well as the propositions of a number of linguists and sociolinguists, such as Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Deborah Cameron, Deborah Tannen and Jennifer Coates, will be looked into in the course of the analysis of a number of plays written by contemporary Scottish women playwrights.

The initial intention was to cover the work of all Scottish and Anglo-Irish playwrights who have been writing since the First World War. Realising that such an overambitious project would have provided a small team of researchers with enough work to last them a lifetime, the scope and time scale was reduced to encompass plays by five contemporary Scottish women playwrights who have been writing for the stage since the late seventies. These authors are Sue Glover, Liz Lochhead, Marcella Evaristi, Sharman Macdonald and Rona Munro. They have been chosen, firstly, because they are representatives of different regional, peer and experiential groups within contemporary Scottish society, and, secondly, because their plays are representative of the themes the author proposes to discuss in this study, and which will be mentioned later in the 'Introduction'. While Sue Glover, Sharman Macdonald and Rona Munro deal with the themes and identities of east-coast of Scotland, Marcella Evaristi and Liz Lochhead come from the west-coast and offer their own unique outlooks on the issue of what it means to be *Scottish* and *female*. For the purpose of an in-depth analysis each playwright will be represented by three plays which reflect all of the issues which will be discussed here. In this manner, the bulk of material which will be examined in this study amounts to fifteen plays which have been written between 1980 and 1995, namely *Mouthpieces* (1980), *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* (1981) and *Commedia* (1982) by Marcella Evaristi; *The Seal Wife* (1980), *The Straw Chair* (1988) and *Bondagers* (1990) by Sue Glover; *Blood and Ice* (1982), *Dracula* (1985) and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) by Liz Lochhead; *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* (1984), *When We Were Women* (1988) and *The Winter Guest* (1995) by Sharman Macdonald; *Fugue* (1983), *Bold Girls* (1990) and *The Maiden Stone* (1994) by Rona

Munro. Each author will be discussed in a separate chapter which will be preceded by this 'Introduction' and followed by a 'Conclusion' in which findings will be briefly summarised; seven chapters in total.

The proposed way of conducting the analysis is twofold. On the one hand, it resembles content analysis which is often considered inconsistent according to e.g. postmodernist critics. The decision to identify and analyse the recurring themes in the authors' writing is founded on a proposition that although these authors come from different geographical, social and linguistic environments, as well as different age groups, they all share common experiences which determine both their sense of femaleness (belonging to a specific gender group) and their sense of Scottishness (belonging to a specific national group). The concepts of gender and national identities are often interchangeable and expressed in their work in a number of easily identifiable themes. The study will concentrate on the issues dealt with by all five authors and pertinent to their exploration of female identity in the plays that will be discussed in this book. To claim that these are the only or even the main themes that the authors deal with would be as overpretentious as it would be limiting. The themes which will be discussed are as follows: woman's position in society, woman's perception of her identity, expression of that identity through interactions with other characters, woman's sexuality and possibility of self-expression and self-assertion through creation (biological and artistic).

The first theme that will be analysed is *woman's position in the society* so as to show how the five authors identify and subvert the concept of separate spheres. The

separate spheres concept divides the social world into 'public and private, economic and domestic, labor and leisure'² and a priori puts men into a dominant position in a public domain, while concurrently banishing woman to a marginal domestic domain. The authorities men and women have in their respective domains are unequal and therefore they place women in a subordinate position both in male domain and in their own. It is very important to state that all of the authors acknowledge the existence of the separate spheres concept, although the ways they choose to deal with it could not be more different. In some cases, the authors make their characters simply observe its existence and accept its inevitability and their own failure to resist it, such as Isabel in *The Straw Chair* who tries in vain to help Rachel's plea be acknowledged to the world, and Bidie in *The Maiden Stone* who, having accepted her own destiny, assists Harriet in dealing with her self-deceptions. In other cases, the authors show how the gender roles can be reversed by placing the female characters in the central position, such as in Sue Glover's portrayal of Rona in *The Seal Wife* who leaves her husband and child in pursuit of her identity, and Rona Munro's portrayal of Mary in *Bold Girls* who faces the mendacity on which her life has been founded, and embraces a different future, lonelier but certainly more truthful. From the first theme arises the second. Based on a woman's position within a given society, it will be examined how this position affects *her perception of identity*. The theme is once again linked with language in the sense that her inability to enter a male-dominated sphere, by using a male genderlect, results in the loss of herstory. A woman character and a woman author, likewise, have become objects and have to reevaluate existing discourse or replace it with a different discourse to assert their subjectivity, the 'I' of their story. This is reminiscent of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic and linguistic theory in which he

suggests that an individual acquires language at the expense of a split in herself 'between the conscious speaking self which enters the symbolic order of language and the repressed unconscious self'.³ This will be dealt with in greater detail in Liz Lochhead's work, and particularly in *Blood and Ice* in which Lochhead examines possible ways of recreating a female storyteller as a subject of herstory. In Lochhead's *Blood and Ice*, and Munro's *Fugue*, amongst other plays, the study will also deal with the notions of fragmentation of identity and multiple identities which ensue from the disparity between the ways women are perceived through men's eyes as opposed to their own. The concept of a woman as an object in man's eyes will be mentioned in the course of this study, as well as a subversion of this concept. For example, in Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula*, the focus is shifted from male to female characters who are turned into subjects by imposing their gaze on the male objects. From this follows the third theme that will be discussed here: *a revaluation of relationships between different characters through their interaction*, the ways the relationships are built and broken on the basis of differences in language use amongst characters. Since this theme is closely linked with the second objective of this study, showing how interaction analysis fares in the examination of female identity, it will be dealt with in detail from linguistic perspective. The fourth theme is *the expression of woman's sexuality and the possibility of self-expression and self-assertion through creation (biological and artistic)*, the issue that has been dealt with in depth in all reviewed plays, in more or less detail. It is proposed in this study that repositioning of woman's position in the interactive power structure has enabled a reexamination of woman's sexuality. All of the five authors give particular attention to the concepts of childbearing and motherhood, in the sense that they reject the notion of those being

'natural', prescriptive of female identity. Their female protagonists see childbirth as life risk, rather than self-expression, and try to assert themselves in alternate ways, such as artistic creation.

On the other hand, the content analysis will correlate with a sort of textual analysis which seeks to show how the five authors use language to explore female identity. The term 'language' can cover a lot of territory that this study is neither prepared nor inclined to explore. Language can be looked at through a prism of different disciplines such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, grammar, syntax, semantics, etc. This study focuses on (a) the ways in which the authors use imagery to explore their characters' female identity, and on (b) the interaction analysis which reflects the position of characters in the society through various modes of communication. In other words, not only does this study offer to examine relationships between different characters and motives behind their actions, but it also proposes to explore the ways in which those characters speak and how their (in)ability to understand each other affect those relationships, and the characters' position in the communicational hierarchy. The analysis will be conducted based on a number of linguistic and sociolinguistic theories about the correlation of language and gender. The theories in question have been carefully taken into account and explored and will be mentioned in this 'Introduction' so as to provide the readership with the necessary tools for an easier understanding of the themes and hypotheses that follow.

In more general terms, definitions of language and gender seem to be clear-cut. For example, *The Penguin English Dictionary* defines language as

[any] system of vocal sounds by which a group of persons can communicate; graphic representation of this; any system of signs, gestures, symbols, etc used as means of communication; characteristic way of using words, style of speaker or writer; [and/or] specialised terminology of a science, profession, craft, etc. ⁴

By the same token, *The Oxford English Dictionary* refers to language, amongst other things, as

the whole body of words and of methods of combination of words used by a nation, people, or race; (...) methods of expressing the thoughts, feelings, wants, etc. otherwise than by words (...). ⁵

In a similar fashion, both dictionaries define gender as 'classification of nouns into kinds, approximating to divisions of sex; (*coll*) sex' ⁶ and

each of the three (or in some languages two) grammatical 'kinds', corresponding more or less to distinctions of sex (and absence of sex) in the objects denoted, into which substantives are discriminated according to the nature of the modification they require in words syntactically associated with them (...). ⁷

In the case of the concept of gender, however, among others, there is the following interesting entry in *The Oxford English Dictionary*:

by some recent philologists applied, in extended sense, to the 'kinds' into which *somebodies are discriminated by the syntactical laws of certain languages the grammar of which takes no account of sex*, thus the North American Indian languages are said to have two 'genders', animate and inanimate (...). ⁸

Loosely speaking, in the previous entries language has been defined as strictly bearing linguistic properties, while gender has quite frequently been mistaken with the concept of sex. In the final entry, however, while both concepts of language and gender have been interlinked and the borders blurred between them, the concept of gender has not only been differentiated from the concept of sex, it has been superimposed on it. In other words it has been considered a higher generic term than sex. Indeed, 'gender' and 'sex' do not have the same meaning. While 'sex' commonly refers to 'organic and functional distinction between male and female', ⁹ and is therefore fixed and stable, 'gender' describes 'socially constructed categories based on sex', ¹⁰ and it is by its nature unfixed and unstable. In other words, according to this view, gender is not something that is prior to culture and social order, it is something that has been constructed by those social groups who dominate them. It does not refer to the biological distinction between the two sexes, on the contrary, it describes an artificially fabricated distinction between socially approved gender roles. In her 1993 book *Women, Men and Language*, Jennifer Coates suggests that creation of such a distinction is part of the socialisation process, and that such a socialisation process is largely conducted through language. In her view, '[l]earning to be male or female in our society means among other things learning to use gender-appropriate language'. ¹¹

Coates further propounds that this process is two-way:

while becoming linguistically competent, the child learns to be a fully fledged male or female member of the speech community; conversely, when children adopt linguistic behaviour considered appropriate to their gender they perpetuate the social order which creates gender distinctions'. ¹²

What transpires from this Coates' statement is that language and gender are undeniably interlinked by their correlative development through social practice.

In her article '*Pickle Fights: Gendered Talk in Preschool Disputes*' (1993),¹³ Amy Sheldon takes up a similar approach to the affiliation between language and gender when she defines language as

a part of culture and an instrument for transmitting and perpetuating implicit, historically situated, and culture-bound principles of social order and systems of belief that define and assign unequal social value to femininity and masculinity.¹⁴

There are three issues that can be extracted from this definition. Firstly, Sheldon refers to language as a social practice which is carried out in accordance with certain societal norms. Secondly, she links it with individual and social identities, in the sense that those identities are shaped and expressed through language in unequal terms. And thirdly, she indicates that as an instrument which can shape individual and social identities through social practice, language can become a powerful weapon in the hands of an influential social group, with the potential to construct the world in which they would have central position. All of these three issues are based on a false premise that both language and gender are fixed unchangeable categories. According to this premise, once specific language use and ensuing gender roles are ascribed as normal, they become normative, they determine not only who and what we are but also who and what we should be. In this sense, they might be classified as useful instruments for

perpetuation of a certain social practice, even more so of a certain social order. If one relates this to propositions of a number of feminist theorists, such as Dale Spender and Sheila Rowbotham, who suggest that social orders are fundamentally male-dominated and see women as an oppressed group, we might be inclined to accept that even when women and men use the same language structure and vocabulary, they ascribe on to them different meanings, to the extent that a number of feminist theorists have claimed that women and men speak different 'genderlects', ¹⁵ or even two completely different languages. In this way differences in women's and men's use of language may be observed in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination. This idea is not new, a number of feminist theorists and female literary practitioners have referred to it in one way or another in the past. For example, in 1929, Virginia Woolf voiced her concern about the inadequacy of existing language to express women's experience.

But it is still true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty - so simple, apparently, in reality, so baffling - that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use. ¹⁶

Woolf offered her solution to the problem by suggesting that a woman author should alter and adapt the current sentence structure until it fits 'the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it'. ¹⁷ Similarly, over forty years later, Dale Spender will postulate in her book *Man-Made Language* (1980) ¹⁸ that while the men

have formulated a semantic rule which posits themselves as central and positive, as the norm, and they have classified the world from that reference point, constructing a symbolic system which represents patriarchal order (...) the female version has been blanketed and made invisible or negative. ¹⁹

Spender goes further to propose that men and women are classified as belonging to public and private spheres respectively, and that this classification, which I will later refer to as the public/private spheres dichotomy, places women in a peripheral position. She deduces from this that language is man-made, an instrument for creating a world where men are central figures and the beneficiaries of patriarchal order which represses and exploits women. Similarly, several years earlier, Sheila Rowbotham proposed in her book *Woman's Consciousness: Man's World* (1973) that language leaves women silent because 'as soon as [they] learn words [they] find [themselves] outside them'.²⁰ According to Spender and Rowbotham, woman writer is a contradiction in terms because as long as *she* means a woman and *he* mankind, women will remain a muted group. For these two authors the only way that women can be heard is if they create a language which could '[construct] the reality of women's autonomy, women's strength, women's power'.²¹ Both Spender and Rowbotham seem to dismiss language as a whole as incapable of expressing women's experiences.

In this sense, Spender's and Rowbotham's proposition is considerably flawed and simplistic due to their maintaining that sex is the main cause for linguistic variation. The way in which one speaks is not a priori determined by one's sex. Sociolinguists such as Labov (1972) and Hymes (1974) have long proved that

communication systems are heterogeneous and multilayered. Social class, region, ethnicity, age, occupation and sex all affect speech behaviour; [and] speakers may also shift speech styles depending on situation, topic and roles.²²

Labov's and Hymes's findings, of course, do not dispute that men and women use language in different ways, however, they imply that the distinction is not straightforward. An educated female speaker will use language differently from a less educated female speaker, and more like an educated male speaker. In an interaction between two female speakers one speaker might assume a dominant role in a similar way that a male speaker would in interaction with a female speaker. In other words, gender-based differences in language use have less to do with language structure and more with styles of interaction. This proposition will be explored with regard to the interaction analysis. Furthermore, use of the term 'sex' rather than 'gender' is profoundly misleading due to the fixed properties of the former, and the unfixed and unstable properties of the latter. The decision to use the latter term in the course of this study is based on the aim to explore not a biologically induced distinction, but rather the sociocultural categories based on it, different ways in which they can be construed, as well as possibilities of their destabilisation, reexamination and redefinition.

Nevertheless, no matter how mistaken Spender's and Rowbotham's views may be, it would be equally erroneous to ignore the fact that the idea of creation of a woman-made language has been significant part of the writings of many feminist theorists for a long time. This idea has been discussed in a more complex manner in the writings of a number of French feminist theorists, from the work of Simone de Beauvoir who identified a woman as the *Other*²³ in relation to the world, to the writings of de Beauvoir's advocates and critics alike. Among the former is Monique Wittig who, in accordance with de Beauvoir's refusal to be *Other*, advocates the abolition of gender,

while an excellent example of the latter is Luce Irigaray, who rejects de Beauvoir's view that woman should strive to cease to be the absolute *Other*, and asserts that it is of utmost importance for a woman to remain 'radically *Other* in order to exit from a [certain] horizon of thought'.²⁴ In other words, instead of abolishing it, one should strive to cultivate gender difference in order to abolish 'historically situated, and culture-bound principles of social order and systems of belief that define and assign unequal social value to femininity and masculinity'.²⁵ By choosing the latter approach it is possible to abandon the dominance approach to gender differences, which sees women as subordinate to men in social interaction, in favour of the difference approach, according to which women and men belong to different (but equal) cultural groups. This is particularly useful because the difference approach distances itself from the concepts of powerfulness vs. powerlessness according to which a woman can only escape a marginal position in social/linguistic interaction 'if she abandons her feminine identity and becomes more like a man'.²⁶ Instead, the difference approach advocates Deborah Cameron's insistence that instead of becoming more like a man, 'women should be able to be different from men without being unequal to them'.²⁷ It is proposed that the five authors whose works are examined in this study are trying to establish the concept of femininity as a personal choice rather than something which is natural to a woman, a sociocultural construct rather than a biological determinant. In their endeavour they may have opened up possibilities to deconstruct old-fashioned notions of womanliness, such as, for example, motherhood. Furthermore, it will become evident, based on the textual analysis which follows, that while the playwrights focus on the exploration of female identity as opposed to masculine values and behaviours favoured by patriarchy, they acknowledge the fact that patriarchy

constructs both genders. Their frequent treatment of male characters as the *Other* echoes Sandra Harding's proposal that masculinity as a gender construct offers 'powerful resources for resistance to the [...] patriarchy that [has] insisted on it in the first place', ²⁸ and that men must determine their own feminisms. Indeed, much remains to be said about diverse ways in which these women playwrights examine the male identity in the light of feminist theories. Although the investigation of male feminisms remains outside the scope of this study, it will be mentioned briefly in conjunction with the proposal that there are certain post-feminist elements in the writing of these playwrights.

The author of this study has purposefully chosen dramatic discourse as the basis of her analysis because she feels that this discourse holds a unique position, due to its containing the elements of both spoken and written language modes. Since in the past the written language was considered superior to the spoken, an interesting problem arises pertaining to those plays which have not been written in what is considered to be a standard variety of British English, or what Franz H. Link calls Queen's English in his 1980 article 'Translation, Adaptation and Interpretation of Dramatic Texts'. ²⁹ Linz discusses different problems arising from translating for the stage. He disavows the central position of Standard English, and suggests that different language varieties should be seen as equal albeit different forms. In this study, particular attention will be given to the use of Scots in dramatic writing of five women playwrights. When referring to Scots, the author has embraced Bill Findlay's suggestion that Scots should be defined as a language in its own right, separate albeit akin to English, because 'the use of the term "dialect" when applied to Scots is problematic in that it can seem to

mean, wrongly, both that Scots is but a regional dialect of English and that there is only one undifferentiated Scots dialect'.³⁰ This study will neither aim to redefine nor give precedence to one view or the other, but will mention this problem when discussing how the five women playwrights use different language varieties to reconstruct and reevaluate female identity in their plays. Deviation from standard language forms does not mean that the authors have abandoned existing discourse in search of their stories. On the contrary, they make use of these discourses and recognisable Scottish experience to uncover and verbalise herstories of women in Scotland which until now have not been generally spoken about, such as for example, dreaming, neurosis and artistic creation.

In addition, the diversity of the dramatic structures and the ways in which the authors explore the issue of mimesis in their plays will also be examined in the course of the analysis. The potential interrelation between form and ideology will be looked at briefly, in accordance with the belief that one's objectives are determined not only by what one says but also how one says it. This is true both of language and structure. In this sense, one can distinguish between metonymic language, which is related to realist (patriarchal) texts, and metaphoric language, which is related to nonrealist (subversive) texts. Or in Bakhtin's terms, language is dialogic (fluid) rather than monologic (fixed). Inscribing new meanings to old words, though, does not mean that such a language would be intelligible only within a certain community. In her book *Verbal Hygiene* (1995) Deborah Cameron refers to this when she rejects the concerns of a number of theorists that 'speakers outside the magic circle of initiates will [...] be unable to assign the word a meaning'.³¹ She comments that if this was true, it would 'put humans on

a par with spellcheck programs'.³² On the contrary, claims Cameron, humans are constantly using their creative abilities 'to make sense of words [they] have never met before, as well as to make new interpretations of old words'.³³ Therefore, if any inability to assign different meanings to words occurs at any point in an interaction, the reasons for it should not be looked for in any alleged natural inflexibility and prescriptiveness of language, but elsewhere. If language is perceived as a public act charged with a number of different properties (such as moral, social and political), then a breakdown in communication must be seen as the reflection of a breakdown in social and political consensus. This further suggests that any departure from accepted linguistic norms will be looked upon as unacceptable and threatening in the same way as any anomalous social behaviour. The division between metonymic (monologic) and metaphoric (dialogic) language can be further translated into the domain of the structure. In this sense, it is proposed that the term an *interrogative* as opposed to a *declarative* text should be used when referring to the works of the five women playwrights. The terms were first introduced by Catherine Belsey in her 1980 book *Critical Practice*,³⁴ in which she draws attention to the potential links between form and ideology in her definitions of realist and non-realist texts. For Belsey, realist texts are declarative, since they '[impart] knowledge to a reader whose position is thereby stabilized'³⁵ and thereby reinstate the dominant ideology. Along this same line, non-realist texts are, according to her, interrogative since they '[disrupt] the unity of the reader'³⁶ and for this reason they can be ideologically subversive. The assumption that the plays by the five Scottish women playwrights, which will be analysed in this study, are interrogative, arises from the fact that their authors use metaphoric

language, and experiment with imagery and non-realist structures in their exploration of gender-related themes and preoccupations.

It is proposed in this study that the five authors employ the imagery and non-realist structures in order to explore beyond representation of social reality. For instance, Lochhead fractures the reality of the play in order to examine the Lacanian split in the female subject, and all of the five playwrights use the mirror imagery in their plays as the means of expressing the split between 'I' subject who speaks and 'I' object who is spoken about. In her book *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997), Elin Diamond talks about the need of 'the split and desiring female subject'³⁷ for the inclusiveness and 'recognition of her gendered body, her race, her ethnicity, her nation'³⁸, as a result of the quarter of a century long struggle of feminism with 'psychoanalytic-semiotic constructions of the female subject in sometimes explosive juxtaposition with empirical approaches to women's lives, histories and politics'.³⁹ Diamond finds this need of the inclusiveness and recognition of the above problematic, since it implies the exclusiveness of mimetic representation. However, at the same time, she presumes that 'representation and social reality are fully imbricated; that discourse and its products (gender, identity, politics) are caught up in fantasies, identifications, and frictional models passing as truths'.⁴⁰ For Diamond, like many other feminist theorists, mimesis represents 'a *truthful* relation between world and word, model and copy, nature and image (...)',⁴¹ in other words, it represents the Truth. However, this Truth is not seen as neutral and omnipotent, it is, according to Diamond, 'inseparable from gender-based and biased epistemologies',⁴² on the contrary, 'the epistemological, morphological, universal standard for determining the true is the masculine, a metaphoric stand-in for God the

Father'.⁴³ Here Diamond refers to objectification of women as dialectical images of the masculine:

(...) in the logos, the language of universal reason, the phallic signifier organizes the production of meaning. Luce Irigaray (...) links phallic power to Platonic mimesis. Lacking the organ of privilege, unable to represent their desires in a male symbolic, women are positioned as the mirror to reflect back the masculine 'Self-Same' Irigaray calls this spectacular operation 'mimesis imposed'.⁴⁴

However, unlike Spender and Rowbotham, and very much in accordance with Irigaray's theory of womb/theatre, Diamond believes that the answer is not in abolishing mimesis but in creating a new, feminist mimesis, and a theatre whose 'mimetic system [would not be] referable to one model, one paradigm... dominated by Truth'.⁴⁵ On the contrary, it would replace Plato's interpretation of logos as truth, with Nietzsche's concept of 'the untruth of truth'.⁴⁶ In this way, it would enable the recognition of the *Other*, the feminine, as the 'I' subject, on the equal terms with the masculine. The five playwrights in question expose in their writing the aforementioned fantasies, identifications, and frictional models which are passed as truths. Hence, they use the traditional imagery such as the nature and mirrors in order to undermine the concept of Truth as the masculine principle, and show quite a different, woman's Truth.

At times the playwrights collide head to head with the principles that have so far been considered fundamental in dramatic writing. For example, an internalisation of conflict as opposed to its externalisation is present in most of their plays. In other words, the conflict is interpolated in a play's language rather than in its action. These women

authors further tend to fragment time, space, action and language in their plays. All of these concepts will be taken into consideration and explored at one time or another during the analysis of their plays. However, since concentrating on these issues could open an entirely new set of problems which lie beyond the scope of this study, they will be briefly referred to but not analysed in full. Instead, the focus will be given to the two concepts which are central to this study. These are the concepts of language and female identity.

In conclusion, this study aims to show, based on its language and gender analysis, the falsity of the dominance approach in language according to which male discourse is rendered normative, as opposed to female discourse which is marginal. The study further proposes that the respective positions of their discourses in the communicational hierarchy are based on inequality of men's and women's position in society, the so-called separate spheres concept, rather than on a biological difference. Women are supposed to act according to certain socially accepted codes. These codes may differ from one society to another and from one period to another, but the fact remains that they contain a prescriptive element which is designed to shape women into socially conditioned roles. The perpetuation of these roles is helped by the continuous repetitions of the actions which, in Cameron's words, 'define those kinds of people until in time they come to seem like a fixed and integral part of our nature.'

⁴⁷ Furthermore, regardless whether women act according to these codes or not, they are ascribed negative attributes. In the former case, they are labelled as 'feminine' and ignored, and in the latter they are considered deviant and threatening. The analysis of the plays by five women playwrights investigates the notion that any transgression

from the norm, in order to construct an identity different from the one culturally prescribed, brings about 'penalties, ranging from being judged eccentric to being ostracized or persecuted to being locked up and stripped of your rights'.⁴⁸

If one is to reassess gender roles in society, in Cameron's words, one must unfix the recurrent actions and transcribe new meanings onto them. In this sense, this study aims to show how the five chosen authors, consciously or unconsciously, unfix the current gender relationships, through their use of themes and language, in order to offer their examination and reevaluation.

Endnotes.

Chapter One - Man's Language, Woman's Meaning: Introduction to Female Identity and Language in the Work of Five Scottish Women Playwrights

¹ Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language, a Sociolinguistic Account of Sex Differences in Language* (New York: Longman, 1986).

² Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 197.

³ Jacques Lacan quoted in Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practise* (London, New York: Methuen Books, 1980), p. 85.

⁴ *The Penguin English Dictionary* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.; New York; Ringwood, Victoria; Markham, Ontario; Auckland: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 431.

⁵ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. vi (L-M) (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961).

⁶ *The Penguin English Dictionary*, p. 322.

⁷ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. iv (G-H) (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961).

⁸ Idem.

⁹ E. Hirsch and G. A. Olson, 'Starting from Marginalized Lives: A Conversation with Sandra Harding' in *Women Writing Culture* (ed.) Deborah Tannen (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 29.

¹⁰ *The Penguin Dictionary*, p. 322.

¹¹ Deborah Cameron, *Women, Men and Language*, p. 198.

¹² Trevor R. Griffiths and Margaret Llewelyn-Jones, 'Introduction' in *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958: A Critical Handbook* (Buckingham-Philadelphia: OUP, 1993), p. 5.

¹³ Amy Sheldon, 'Pickle Fights: Gendered Talk in Preschool Disputes' in Deborah Tannen, *Gender and Conversational Interaction* (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1993).

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁵ Deborah Tannen claims in her book *You Just Don't Understand* (London: Virago Press, 1992) that since 'women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy [and] men speak and hear a language of status and independence, then communication between men and women can be like crosscultural communication, prey to a clash of conversational styles' (p. 42). In this sense, instead of saying that men and women speak different dialects, Tannen suggests that they speak different genderlects.

¹⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing* (London: Women's Press, 1979), p. 48.

¹⁷ Idem.

- ¹⁸ Dale Spender, *Man-Made Language* (London: RKP, 1980), p. 58.
- ¹⁹ Idem.
- ²⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women's Consciousness: Man's World* (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 190.
- ²¹ Dale Spender, *Man-Made Language* (London: RKP, 1980), p. 190.
- ²² Idem.
- ²³ Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* elaborates theory of woman as the absolute Other of Western culture.
- ²⁴ E. Hirsch and G. A. Olson, 'Je-Luce Irigaray': A Meeting with Luce Irigaray' in *Women Writing Culture* (ed.) Deborah Tannen (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 142.
- ²⁵ Amy Sheldon, 'Pickle Fights: Gendered Talk in Preschool Disputes' in Deborah Tannen, *Gender and Conversational Interaction*, p. 84.
- ²⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness: Man's World* (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 33. Quoted in Dale Spender, *Man-Made Language* (London: RKP, 1980), p. 158.
- ²⁷ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, p. 198.
- ²⁸ E. Hirsch and G. A. Olson, 'A Conversation with Sandra Harding' in *Women Writing Culture* (ed.) Deborah Tannen, pp. 30-1.
- ²⁹ Franz H. Link, 'Translation, Adaptation and Interpretation of Dramatic Texts' in *The Languages of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama* (ed.) Ortrun Zuber (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Paris, Frankfurt: Pergamon Press, 1980).
- ³⁰ Bill Findlay, 'Translating Into Dialect' in *Stages of Translation* (ed.) David Johnston (Bath: Absolute Classics, 1996), pp.200-1.
- ³¹ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, pp. 4-5.
- ³² Ibid., pp. 24-5.
- ³³ Idem.
- ³⁴ Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practise* (London, New York: Methuen, 1980).
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 9.
- ³⁶ Idem.
- ³⁷ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. ii.
- ³⁸ Idem.
- ³⁹ Idem.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. iii.
- ⁴¹ Elin Diamond, 'Mimesis, Mimicry and the "True Real"' in *Modern Drama*, 32:1 (March 1989), p. 58.
- ⁴² Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. iii.
- ⁴³ Idem.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. iv.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. xi.
- ⁴⁶ Idem.
- ⁴⁷ Catherine Belsey, p. 9.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

Chapter Two

Women like Islands: Plurality of Female Discourse in

Three Plays by Sue Glover

2.1. *About the playwright*

Sue Glover, a daughter of a veterinary surgeon, was born in Edinburgh on 1 March 1943. She graduated from Edinburgh University in English and French language and literature. Most of her life she has lived on the east coast of Scotland, apart from two years that she spent in London working as a teacher and a secretary, followed by a year in France where she attended Montpellier University. At present she and her husband live in Fife. She is married with two children.

Glover began to write professionally in the seventies, mostly for radio. In 1980, she was commissioned to write her first full-length play, *The Seal Wife*, for the Little Lyceum. Since then, her theatre output has included *The Bubble Boy* (1981), *An Island in Largo* (1981), *The Straw Chair* (1988), *Bondagers* (1991), *Sacred Hearts* (1994), and *Artist Unknown* (1995). Several of her plays have been published, namely, *The Bubble Boy* in *You don't know you're born, Upstage series, short plays by different writers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), *Bondagers* in *Made in Scotland, An Anthology of New Scottish Plays* (London: Methuen, 1995) and an acting edition (Woodstock, Illinois: The Dramatic Publishing Company, 1997), *Bondagers* and *The Straw Chair* in *Two Plays by Sue Glover* (London: Methuen, 1997). Her other work includes several radio plays *The Watchie* (BBC, 1976), *Shift*

Work (BBC, 1979), *The Benjamin* (BBC, 1983), *The Wish House* (BBC, 1984), *Mme Perle* (BBC, 1986) and *The Child and the Journey* (BBC, 1994); as well as a number of television scripts such as *Home Front* (STV, 1980), *The Spaver Connection* (STV, 1982), *The Bubble Boy* (STV, 1983), *Madame Montand and Mrs Miller* (BBC), *Dear Life* (BBC Schools Scene, 1992; adaptation of *The Bubble Boy*), *Strathblair* (BBC, 1992; two episodes), *Take the High Road* (STV; fifty episodes).

2.2. *About this chapter*

Glover falls between two groups of women playwrights in Scotland, namely those who had produced their main literary output long before the seventies (such as Meta Blair, Ena Lamont Stewart, Ada J. Stewart and Joan Ure) and those who began their professional playwriting careers in the early eighties (such as Liz Lochhead, Marcella Evaristi, Rona Munro, Anne Marie di Mambro etc), and although one might feel inclined to describe her work as a link between the kitchen-and-sink realism of the earlier women playwrights and an exploratory, often non-naturalistic output of the latter group, she stands very much on her own in the history of the women's playwriting in Scotland. Although her dramatic writing still has its stronghold in naturalism, she infuses into naturalistic discourse, which usually relies on an all-knowing narrator and a linear storyline, multiple discourses which run in parallel (or are interpolated into one another) and never quite come together in a single linear line. Besides fragmenting the structure of her plays, Glover also fragments the protagonists and peoples her world with individuals who communicate in broken, dislocated ways, which prevent them from understanding each other.

In her writing Glover investigates a relationship between power and autonomy, a society and an individual, which is a relationship of repression rather than co-operation. Glover's protagonists, and especially her female protagonists, are always outsiders in relation to the society. Susan Triesman refers to this in her article '*Transformations and transgressions: Women's discourse on the Scottish stage*' (1993) when she suggests that in her writing Sue Glover concentrates on 'difference, transgression and the outcast as images central to women's experience'.¹ The existence of Glover's protagonists is deviant from the societal norms through either choice or circumstances beyond their control. For example, for Rona in *The Seal Wife*, isolation rises from her personal choice, while Tottie in *The Bondagers* and Rachel in *The Straw Chair* become victims of isolation through the intolerance of their communities to their physical and emotional states. All of this is evident from the characters' linguistic interaction, during which it is easy to depict the communicational hierarchy upon which the characters' relationships are based.

Although in most of her plays Glover concentrates on female protagonists, she is ambivalent about being called a feminist author. Interestingly, during interviews on two separate occasions, she first denied, and later answered positively the question whether she considered herself a feminist writer. This ambivalence rises from Glover's refusal to be labelled. In an interview given to the author of this study, she claims that although there is much about women that she would like to do, she does not wish to limit herself to women's issues only in case she 'want[s] to do something like Alexander Selkirk again'.² This chapter concentrates on the strand in her writing which relates to identity and gender relationships as seen from the perspective of

female protagonists. The aim is to show, on the basis of the examples from three of Glover's plays *The Seal Wife* (1980), *The Straw Chair* (1988) and *Bondagers* (1990), the ways in which Glover employs themes and language to investigate her characters' perception of female identity, their position in society, interactions with other characters (both male and female), their sexuality and possibilities of self-expression through means other than motherhood.

2.3. *The Seal Wife* (1980)

The seal hunter Alec and his mother Agnes live a secluded life on the beach, away from the small local fishing community represented in the characters of two elderly sisters Dot and Cath. When Alec accidentally wounds a young woman, Rona, during one of his seal hunts, he brings her home and begins an affair with her, the affair which will change the lives and attitudes of all the protagonists in the play. During her pregnancy with their daughter, Rona becomes increasingly antagonistic towards Alec's hunting. Her attempt to stop him from going on another hunting spree ends in conflict and Alec leaves. After the birth, Rona is restless and neither love for her daughter, Isla, nor Miss Manzie's professional chatter nor Agnes' empathy can relieve this restlessness. She disappears at the end of the play, leaving Alec bitter in his inability to understand, and Agnes quietly determined to bring up Rona's daughter in accordance to Rona's ideals.

In her first full-length stage play, *The Seal Wife* (1980), Glover turns to the Scottish folk tradition, when she sets her tale of the five protagonists who co-exist on the limb of a small Fife fishing community against the background of the folk legend of the Silkies, the Seal People. Agnes Grey and her son Alec live in a cottage on a secluded beach, away from the village. Their isolation is occasionally broken by brief encounters with the local beachpickers Dot and Cath Christie and a retired midwife, Miss Manzie. Glover depicts the characters through their relationship with a

mysterious young woman, Rona, whose sudden appearance and bond with the sea and seals will drive them to reexamine their own existence, with tragic consequences.

In her exploration of a woman as the other, an outsider in the male-dominated society, Glover makes an extensive use of two metaphors - sea and island - which represent powerful forces of human nature. When discussing Rona in a recent interview, Glover admitted that she had included in the character personal dilemmas about marriage and motherhood that had plagued her at the time when she was writing the play. After meeting Alec for the first time, Rona is seduced by the idea of romantic love and coaxed into a relationship in which she feels powerless and misunderstood. While Alec comes and goes as freely as he pleases, she is caught between her aspirations and obligations to others, her child in particular, which she finds both limiting and alien to her nature. Alec does not understand her restlessness and wish for a change, for him the traditional gender role play on which their relationship is based is natural and satisfactory. At first sight the character outline in *The Seal Wife* seems to represent a straightforward example of the separate spheres model. Who they are and where they stand in the social hierarchy is defined by what they do - Alec is a seal hunter, a patriarchal male whose dominance has been grudgingly accepted but never questioned prior to Rona's arrival, Agnes is a tragic mother-figure whose life is based on duty and self-sacrifice, Dot and Cath are shown as eccentric maids whose *inability to get their man* has made them concentrate on each other, and Miss Manzie is another cliché in dramatic literature, a retired midwife in search of purpose in her life. On the surface they are all stereotypes, however these stereotypes will be eroded and re-examined in the light of their contact with Rona, a complex character who defies compartmentalisation. Glover uses the myth about the seal people to show the

different ways in which men and women perceive sexuality as part of their identities. Triesman remarks that 'the boundary-crossing capacity of the seal people' ³ reflects sexuality as chaos, further represented through the metaphors of sea and wildness. When Rona appears from the sea and enters Alec's life, she brings with her the chaos which will destroy Alec's carefully ordered world. He is powerfully drawn to her wild nature, but it also frightens him, in the same way that he is fascinated and frightened by the sea that feeds him. Probably for the first time in his life, he allows himself to openly express his emotions.

ALEC: ... When I hunt... I share their fear. Out there alone, I fear other men as much as they do - other men, other guns. When you hunt something, you become - what you hunt. You can escape - into their world.

RONA: You'll be saying next that you love them!

ALEC: Well, maybe I do. Maybe it is something like that. (...) ... They have a spell over me. I don't always hunt them. Often I just watch them. Over on the island. (*Determined to make her say something*) ... I'm sure that's where I've seen you. (act I, scene ii, p. 19)

The island has become a metaphor for the characters' emotional world, their dreams and aspirations. Rona warns Alec that his dream is false, and that he knows nothing about her. She does not wish to be idealised by him, but rather understood and accepted for what she is. By the same token, Alec's boat becomes a metaphor for sexual intercourse. In teasing and coaxing him by her denial that she has ever been on his boat, Rona obeys the rules of the mating game that will lead to Alec's open admission of his passion for her and her ultimate surrender in the both symbolic and literal act of following him to the island.

ALEC: (...) I'll take you with me to the island.

RONA: (Bitterly) Why?
 ALEC: To show you the birds - and the seals. To show you I don't spend all my time killing. To show you - that I want you to stay.
 RONA: All right! Take me to the island - now!
 ALEC: Now? Shouldn't we find your clothes -
 RONA: Now! We'll go now! Where's your boat?
 ALEC: On the beach.
 RONA: Are you coming, then? (*She laughs strangely as he picks up his boots and socks*) You don't need these! Come barefoot, like me!
 (*He hesitates, wanting to put them on*)
 I want you to take me to the island. (act I, scene ii, pp. 20-1)

As of this moment Rona's surrender is complete and unconditional, and its magnitude frightens Alec. She is ready to leave everything behind and cross the boundaries, while Alec's hesitation is symbolised by his clinging to what he knows.

Soon after their journey to the island, the different ways that Alec and Rona perceive gender roles brings their relationship to breaking point. Rona becomes increasingly uncomfortable with the stereotypical gender role of a patriarchal male that Alec has assumed. She is disgusted with Alec the hunter, Alec the seal murderer. Looking beyond the folktale background of the story, one notices a clear pattern of gender relationships that Glover lays out before her audience. As one of the seal people, Rona represents the Other, marginalised and repressed by the male imperative which is exemplified in Alec. Rona, the seal wife, also represents an emotional element in human nature. In this sense, her protest against Alec's seal hunting can be interpreted as not only a rejection of an inhumane trade but also a protest against his inability to express his emotions for her. Alec's attitude is that love and sex are something outside the realm of everyday, and he therefore finds difficult in discussing it openly. Rona finds this attitude increasingly repressing and alienating.

ALEC: (...) I haven't forgotten being on the island. Midsummer. Not madness, but the dream. I haven't forgotten. It's not a lie. It's the dream and it's true - still - whenever we're on the beach alone, or making love, or out with the boat... (*Losing patience*) But, a man has to be up and doing something, for Crissake! He can't sit staring at the sea all day, lie looking at his lover all night.

RONA: Why not?

ALEC: I don't know - they wouldn't be dreams anymore - I don't know.

RONA: You mean a man has to wake up and start killing. Midsummer! Til midwinter and long after, you never spoke or thought of killing. (act I, scene ii, p. 29)

From Alec's point of view, the mating game is over, and he does not feel the same need as Rona to openly display his affections. Furthermore, he mistakes possession for a relationship, and gets increasingly jealous of and angry with Rona for spending much time on her own. He accuses her of wishing to be 'two people', ⁴ she wants to be in the relationship and have her freedom at the same time, a prerogative that he himself has been taking for granted. Her yearning for both confuses him because it opposes the concept of womanliness as he knows it. Rona refuses to be just a wife and a mother, and by abandoning the domestic sphere, traditionally assigned to womanhood, she leaves Alec no recognisable point of reference. He keeps repeating to her that she does not understand, while actually he is left at sea by his constant need to rationalise everything. The hunter in him wishes to control Rona's wildness and to change it in order to fit in the world order that he finds acceptable, in the same way that he instinctively struggles with Dot for territorial ownership of the beach. Unable to separate love and ownership, and determined to preserve status quo, he suppresses and marginalises Rona, and in doing so he destroys whatever has originally attracted him to her. Rona refers to this when she talks about 'seals love'. ⁵

RONA: 'Seals, love'..... 'Seals, love!'..... Seals love!
(She's hysterical, half-laughing, half-crying, up from the bed, away from him, shivering, hugging herself with cold) For weeks and weeks you've been telling me to wake up. Well, I'm awake now, I'm alive and I'm telling you - oh, I'm telling you, Alec - seals love!
 (act I, scene iii, p. 42)

This is Rona's final plea with Alec to acknowledge her difference and her needs. It is also the point at which Rona begins to realise that her attempt to save both her relationship with Alec and her independence has failed and that she has to choose between her own needs and her obligations towards the others. Mary Belenky refers to this in her proposition that the women 'can be caring and nurturing to others but full of self - that they don't have to be selfless'.⁶ Glover's handling of the gender conflict between Rona and Alec is in direct opposition to Belenky's proposition. Belenky's proposition refers to women's potential position in an ideal world, however, the existing world order is based on the dualistic principle which makes it impossible for a '[female] voice [to be] associated with gender without being encased in gender'.⁷ In the example of Rona, Glover shows how the existing world is based on the system of gender inequality within which gender roles have been strictly defined in favour of a male counterpart.

The inability to reconcile one's aspirations, on the one hand, and one's obligations towards the other people, on the other hand, is further symbolised in the seal skin that Rona 'shed' when she came out of sea. The shedding of the seal skin in this sense represents her abandoning of *self* in favour of *selflessness*. Vice versa, her final act of putting on the seal skin exemplifies her returning to *self*. She is forced to choose each

time, it is impossible for her to belong to the both worlds at the same time. There is an interesting deviation from the original folk-tale where the skin is stolen by a man, and the seal wife kept away from the sea against her will. In this play, although Alec is partly to blame for Rona's coming to the shore (he wounds her with his gun), she remains with him by choice. The skin is taken, not by Alec, but by Cath and Dot, neither of whom knows what to do with it. However, while Dot sees in it only commercial value, Cath suspects that it is no ordinary skin and throws it back to the sea where she feels it belongs. By this Cath shows that she instinctively knows that there is a choice, even though she does not recognise it as such until the end of the play, while Dot cannot see it at all.

A particular aspect, or rather consequence, of female sexuality that Glover investigates is women's capacity to procreate. Alec ignores his mother's warning that Rona's restlessness is not a passing phase, and grows confident that pending motherhood will affect Rona's attitude.

ALEC: A baby..... She'll be settled now, surely! She'll be happier when there's a bairn to look after. (act I, scene iii, p. 49)

He immediately begins to plan how *he* must provide for his new family unit. This shows that Alec's is a fundamentally patriarchal perspective which places the male in the central position. Rona is pushed into the background - her function is to mother his child. Alec does not for one moment doubt the traditional gender division which defines a woman through motherhood. Rona's rejection of such classification confounds him, as does her final act of walking out on him and their newborn child.

Rona's feeling of isolation grows following the birth of her daughter. From conversation between her and Miss Manzie (act II, scene i) it is clear that she has finally understood that waiting and babies is what her life will consist of if she stays with Alec. Miss Manzie does not recognise Rona's inner struggle, and she attributes Rona's behaviour to the physical isolation often experienced by young mothers. There is a comic trait to Miss Manzie's character which rises from her self-delusion that she can understand what Rona is going through. In reality, Miss Manzie fails to see the obvious because she is too busy applying the societal rules that have been imposed on both of them. She cannot understand Rona's anger and is horrified at Rona's statement that she will not have any other children and that indeed she wishes her daughter has never been born. Rona's anger grows from her realisation that, firstly, pregnancy and birth are processes over which she has no control and that, secondly, by giving birth to her daughter she brings into the world another outsider who will perpetuate the reproductive cycle which has confined her.

The gender-induced 'otherness' of both the mother and the child is evoked in their names. Rona tells Miss Manzie that her name means 'the island of the seal', ⁸ and similarly, she names her daughter Isla, 'the water baby'. ⁹ Miss Manzie's given name, Jennifer, also reflects the 'otherness' of her gender. Jennifer means 'a white wave', ¹⁰ as she herself admits to Rona. When asked whether Isla is a family name Rona confirms it with the sudden realisation that, in a manner of speaking, it is so. There is an elaborate game at work in these names, their very utterance resonates with the isolation that Rona is feeling. The island which is the metaphor for their dreams and

aspirations becomes the metaphor of their separation and marginalisation from the male-dominant sphere.

RONA: It's a girl, a daughter.... Not another hunter! Another island! Another prey! (act II, scene i, p. 56)

The violation of seals, the shedding of seals' blood is compared here with the violation of a woman's body and the birth blood. Returning to Alec's earlier statement about being at one with his prey, it could be postulated that although a man causes life and death, he is still outside them, he is excluded from the experience. Luce Irigaray refers to this in an interview with E. Hirsch and G. A. Olson when she discusses the difference between boys and girls being both anatomical and relational. According to Irigaray, unlike girls who are able to give birth, boys exist 'in a space of unfathomable mystery' and must 'construct a world in order to construct [themselves]'.¹¹ In Irigaray's terms, Alec's inability to engender, drives him to employ the strategy of mastery over life through suppression of an agent who can create it.

There is an ironic resonance in Glover's portrayal of Alec's seemingly dominant position in the universe of the play. He might be dominant with regard to his female co-protagonists in the play but his physical removal from the community indicates the relativity of this position within the community as a whole. He and his mother are regarded with suspicion and resentment by other villagers. The suspicion rises from the fact that they have both been abandoned by David, Agnes's husband, at a time and place where the status of a single mother was regarded as demeaning. The resentment is due to Alec's involvement in illegal seal hunts and to the fact that neither he nor his

mother have made any effort to fit into the community. Indeed, Alec regards the villagers with equal resentment and seeks to establish his space outside the societal laws. Early in the play he threatens the two beach-pickers at gunpoint.

ALEC: You'd better be careful, Dot Christie. You be careful what you say about my mother and me, when you're prying and spying round our cottage.

CATH: We weren't round the cottage at all - we were just passing by on our way home, just passing by.

ALEC: Well, pass, then, go on, pass. (act I, scene i, p. 5)

The intruders are seen as a threat and immediately rejected, and those who are allowed in, like Rona, are made to obey the community's strict rules. His eagerness to establish dominance within the boundaries of his self-made microworld is met with hostility by Dot Christie who, provoked by Alec's competitive behaviour, describes him and his mother as losers.

DOT:(...) What have those two got - him and his mother - to walk so proud for? As if they owned the beach! Nothing - sweet bloody nothing! She couldn't keep her man, her son couldn't keep a job - (act I, scene i, p. 4)

The dichotomy between *owning* and *belonging* is essential in *The Seal Wife*. All of the characters in the play are defined by one of the two concepts. Alec's need to set the boundaries of his space, in this case the beach around the cottage, makes him proprietorial and overprotective towards everything and everyone who coexist in that space. Nature is here to meet his needs, and he takes from it indiscriminately. Unlike Alec who has adopted an active strategy of aggressive appropriation of his space,

which places him in the central position, Agnes's is a passive strategy which implies that she belongs to the place and not vice versa.

AGNES: (...) Oh - it was never the place I loved, it was David.
But - a person can belong to a place... without understanding why.
(act II, scene i, p. 60)

This passive strategy corresponds to Belenky's description of the conventional woman as selfless, caring and nurturing. This is reflected in Agnes' reply to Rona's question as to why she did not leave with David.

AGNES: Well, if I'd thought David had wanted me to go - but I couldn't. There was Alec to think of. I couldn't be in two places, searching and waiting. There's always someone to look after; love, and look after. (act II, scene i, p. 58)

This feeds into Rona's own dilemma about balancing two such fundamentally different positions as searching and waiting. Rona does not belong in the concept of ownership. On the one hand, she is aware that she cannot change Alec, and she refuses either to be controlled by him or to control her own child. On the other hand, although she is determined to transgress the confinements of the traditional female gender role, she understands that in the existing world order her transgression can never be complete. Motherhood is an important aspect of the conventional female gender role, and Rona is a mother and will always be regarded as one. Therefore, in her refusal to be limited to a single sphere, she ceases to belong to either and becomes 'invisible' to both worlds.

Agnes and Rona represent the two aspects of female experience that are inherent in Agnes' speech, those of 'waiting' and 'searching'. Glover does not give precedence

to one over the other. She believes that there must be a way to reconcile them. There is an unspoken solidarity between those two female characters, they complement each other in the sense that Rona could not choose *self* without Agnes's choice of *selfless*. The conventional gender division is based on the premise that the feminine principle is objectivised and subordinate to the masculine principle which constitutes the subject. It is therefore perceived that only through subjectivisation of the feminine principle can any equality between the two be achieved. This has led to a range of theories, from those which advocate the abolition of gender difference (which would in turn abolish the subject/object dichotomy) to those who believe that women can only achieve equality through either adopting the male voice or cultivating the female voice which is separate but equal to the male voice. So, if Rona represents the active 'I' of the subject, and if correspondingly Agnes represents the passive 'I' of the object, why does Glover not simply abolish the latter in favour of the former? It is because the feminine principle does not consist of a single immutable voice, it is a cluster of different and constantly changing discourses. The conventional dualistic world order and its rigidly defined gender roles can only be transgressed through the dialectic between the two 'I's. According to this, Rona and Agnes could be taken as the two sides of the same coin. Glover does not offer any resolution, however, the final image of Agnes cradling Rona and Alec's daughter represents hope that the two aspects of female experience might be reconciled in the future.

Dot and Cath Christie, two middle-aged beachpickers, are another two interesting characters on which to focus the analysis of female identity and gender roles, and their constant bickering provides a bittersweet comic relief to Alec and Rona's tragic story. From their first appearance it is clear from their respective language use that Dot has

assumed the dominant position in the relationship, as opposed to Cath's more submissive and pensive linguistic nature. In productions Cath is frequently shown as half-witted and in need of being taken care of, while Dot is in turn reduced to a bickering mother-figure, the traditional image of a Scottish hag. Although Glover indeed leaves space for such an interpretation it is possible to suggest another reading which might show these two characters in quite a different light. Most of the theoreticians concentrate on the male-female discourse dichotomy based on either the separate spheres or the different spheres concepts, while at the same time neglecting the difference within the female discourse, or rather its plurality. If the relationship between Dot and Cath is examined closely, it becomes clear that it is ordered on the principle of dominance and subordination. On the one hand, Dot takes over the central position usually monopolised by a male, she controls and bullies Cath in a similar way that Alec controls and bullies Rona. Cath, on the other hand, occupies the marginal position usually occupied by the female, her voice is silenced by Dot's dominant discourse. The following example shows how this is manifest in their language.

DOT: Where the hell have you been?
 CATH: Picking coal.
 DOT: In the dark?
 CATH: (*Placid, plaintive*) It wasn't dark - not when I first came down.
 DOT: I've been all along the far end of the beach looking for you.
 CATH: I started from there. Right from the old pit-head and all the way along here. I've got quite a lot of coal.
 DOT: Call that a lot?
 CATH: It's a lovely night. I wasn't minding how much I got.
 DOT: It's dark - you great sumph! - how can you see to pick coal off the beach in the dark?
 CATH: It wasn't dark when I came down.
 DOT: And you've got a puncture!
 CATH: Och, it's just a bit flat.
 DOT: Could you not have pumped it up then? - Here! Give me that! - Leave it!
She grabs the bike from Cath, begins fixing the pump to it.
 CATH: Did you hear any music, earlier on, Dot? (act I, scene i, pp. 1-2)

It is evident from the above that Dot's discourse has attributes that are usually associated with male discourse, namely it is assertive, aggressive and dominant. Her questions are given in the form of command, and she curses a lot, another feature associated with male discourse as opposed to female discourse which is considered more indirect, polite. Cath's discourse is 'placid' and 'plaintive', as Glover herself says in the stage directions, it is more discursive and it seeks to avoid confrontation. Therefore, Dot's and Cath's use of language indicates two different female discourses, while the former strives to intrude into and master male discourse which is competitive, 'treating their turn as a chance to overturn earlier speakers' contributions and to make their own point as forcibly as possible', ¹² the latter is based on the belief that female discourse should not compete with the male but rather be different and equal to it. This second type of female discourse is usually given attributes such as co-operative, 'supportive of others', ¹³ rather than demolishing and interrupting them. The two discourses are fragmented and in direct opposition which makes it impossible for their users to understand each other. Most of female characters in *The Seal Wife* can be associated with either the former or the latter mode. The former mode is represented by Dot, and to some extent Miss Manzie whose weak attempts to show her superior insight into Rona's situation end in reluctant admission that she does not understand her at all. The latter mode is represented by Cath and Agnes, through their silent acceptance of their position. The exception is Rona who is caught between the two modes. Rona's ambivalent position with regard to the two competing discourses indicates that rather than give precedence to the one over the other, there is a need for a dialectic between them.

2.4. *The Straw Chair* (1988)

The aging minister Aneas and his newly-wed young bride Isabel arrive to St. Kilda, after an uncomfortable sea journey from Edinburgh. They are uncomfortable with each other and their shyness prevents them from consummating their marriage. At the island they meet Rachel, Lady Erskine, who has been exiled there by her husband and his Jacobite friends, and is guarded by a local woman Oona. While Aneas rejects Rachel's coarse appearance and behaviour, Isabel is much more receptive, and slowly she begins to understand the reasons for Rachel's deterioration, as well as accepting the ways of the local community. After the failure of Isabel's attempt to help Rachel by smuggling on board the Steward's ship a letter that the unfortunate woman has written to her cousin in Edinburgh, she and her husband are exiled from St. Kilda. At the end of the play Isabel and Aneas have acknowledged the mendacity of the societal system that has discarded Rachel, and is about to discard them in a similar fashion, but have found comfort in the gentle bond between them, while Rachel is left on the island, accompanied only by Oona and locked into powerless silence.

The plurality of female discourse and its position, with regard to male discourse, in the communicational hierarchy in a predominately patriarchal society will be further examined in the examples from Glover's 1988 play *The Straw Chair*. Glover fleshes out the historic character of Rachel Lady Grange, who has often been reduced to a footnote in the local histories of St. Kilda (or Hirta as the locals used to call it), in order to examine woman's position as *marginalised* and *the Other* in eighteenth-century Scottish society. Rachel, Lady Grange of Erskine, was the wife of the Lord Advocate who had her abducted in order to prevent her from revealing his links with Jacobites and political corruption in the highest circles of the Edinburgh society. She was subsequently taken to the island of St. Kilda where she was held prisoner until her death. The physical removal of Rachel from Edinburgh to a remote Scottish island and preventing any written correspondence between her and her family - which makes it impossible for her voice to be heard - represents both physical and intellectual silencing of the feminine principle, its forcible removal from the public sphere. In her disclosure

of the hypocrisy of the societal norms in eighteenth-century Scottish society, Glover touches upon the issue of economic and sexual exploitation of women. For example, in that period, men had legal right to remove their spouses from the public sphere. In *The Straw Chair*, when his wife informs him that Rachel might be held on Hirta against her will by the laird of the isle, Aneas placidly replies that 'things are managed differently in [that] part of the world'.¹⁴ He is perfectly at ease with the existing gender hierarchy which places women in a subordinate position and warns Isabel to comply with the prescribed norms, which are fundamentally man-made norms. Deborah Cameron refers to this double standard when she stipulates that in different historical periods women achieved social respectability through male approval and that the traditional reward for physical, moral or indeed linguistic self-improvement of a female was always 'the love of an eligible man'.¹⁵ In this way an indisputable link between socially acceptable (marriage) and socially unacceptable (prostitution) sexual exploitation was established. Cecily Hamilton notes in her 1909 play *Marriage as a Trade* that a woman in love is not merely 'a woman swayed by emotions, but a human being engaged in carving for herself a career or securing for herself a means of livelihood'.¹⁶ In *The Straw Chair* Glover questions the conventional definitions of womanhood based on clichés from advice literature (such as women's magazines) which encompass all aspects of women's duties, appearance and behaviour. She particularly criticizes the concept of romantic love from popular fiction genres based on the Cinderella formula. She further intensifies the characters' marginalisation-through-gender by introducing class and language division. Besides male-female division, the women themselves are also divided by their different social positions and by the different language modes that they use.

When referring to the functions of verbal hygiene,¹⁷ Cameron proposes that language has power to symbolically stand for other kinds of order such as social, political and moral. In her discussion about verbal hygiene, Cameron makes the link between the social norms, gender and language use of a community in a certain historic period. Given that social norms, gender divisions and particular language use are defined by a particular dominant group in a society, they have a potential to create a system of cultural, social and political beliefs and rituals which will perpetuate that group's dominant position in their community. In both traditional and revisionist histories this dominant group has always been defined in terms of a class, and different aspects such as ethnicity and gender have often been disregarded. The early feminist theories recognised this oversight and proposed another classification between the *patriarchal* (male, white, middle-class) and the *Other* (female, non-white, working-class). According to this classification, the male occupies a dominant, authoritative and powerful position, as opposed to the female whose position is seen as marginal, subordinate and powerless. If this argument is extended to language, what ensues from it is that since it has been shaped by the dominant group (male), it therefore serves to marginalise and oppress the subordinate group (female). Dale Spender, for example, claims that language which supports patriarchal hierarchy is imposed on females, since both sexes inhabit 'a male-decreed reality and make sense of the world in terms of male meanings'.¹⁸ Those meanings which do not support such a reality are immediately discarded and rendered invisible, making it impossible for a woman to express her experience in such a man-made language.

This male/female dichotomy is simplistic because it neglects the whole range of divisions, e. g. women who belong to a different class or ethnic community or both, heterosexual and homosexual individuals of both genders etc. Furthermore, there is a difference between language and meaning which Spender does not make in her discussion. Contrary to Spender's idea that language is man-made and unequal in itself, Deborah Tannen's proposition suggests that the problem does not lie in the existence of differing meanings and language norms but rather in the idea that they should be ranked. Rather than changing male and female speech habits which are equally valid and part of their identities, Tannen proposes, one should endeavour 'to change their responses to the habits of the opposite sex'.¹⁹ In *The Straw Chair* Glover does exactly that. She creates three very different female protagonists who at the first sight could be labelled as three types of the feminine in the eyes of the traditional separate spheres model - the virgin, the strumpet and the old hag. However, during the play, Glover proceeds to explode those three types, endowing quite different meanings to their gender and linguistic attributes, shifts which are made even more noticeable through their interaction with Aneas, the only male character in the play.

At first sight Isabel and Rachel are perceived as typical examples of the virgin-strumpet dichotomy. Isabel's chastity and sense of duty are established early in the play as the perception of femininity favoured by the bourgeoisie. When Aneas talks about what attracted him to Isabel, the picture of her that he describes is the picture of a Madonna.

ANEAS: I could not find words for you, when I first met you.
Each time I called at the house - you had a child on your knee and
another at your feet (...). (act II, scene iii, p. 74)

During one of her early conversations with Lady Rachel, Isabel is referred to as 'not very pretty'.²⁰ It is obvious that in his choice of a bride Aneas was guided by her conduct rather than her looks. When she asks him if he would allow her to go to the Assemblies when they are back in Edinburgh, he rejects the idea as unnecessary because she is already married, and is surprised that she can dance at all.

ANEAS: No, [your uncle] never mentioned you could dance.
He told me you had learnt to make pastry, and to spin flax into yarn
that was fine enough for cambric. And that you were a sweet mother
to your younger cousins. (act I, scene ii, p. 26)

It is obvious from the Aneas' initial conduct towards Isabel that she has been chosen because her upbringing would make her a model minister's wife, and every hint of sensuality on her part causes awkwardness in Aneas and is therefore ignored. Isabel is initially shown as a bashful and naive young woman who could be easily moulded according to Aneas' wishes. She also possesses the virtue which was held in high regard by the men at that time, in that she is silent. This model of the silent woman was taken as an ideal from the tradition of early romances, e.g. Jennifer Coates gives examples of Arthurian romances and stories such as Eree and Enyd, and was as such adopted by the bourgeoisie. In the beginning of the play, as opposed to Aneas's clerical verbosity, Isabel speaks only when she is spoken to, and even then she speaks only in brief sentences, or half-sentences. She voices her husband's opinions rather than her own, and when she disagrees with him she is silent. Her silence is synonymous with her obedience to her husband.

Rachel, on the contrary, is everything that Aneas thinks a woman should not be. He calls her a 'strumpet' and forbids Isabel to talk to her. Rachel is clearly not a likable character and neither has Glover planned to make her such. Isabel fears her, Aneas is disgusted by her behaviour and appearance and Oona, a local woman who takes care of her, calls her an 'Ochan', ²¹ a 'great Skua', ²² a bird of omen. Glover admits that it was precisely this ambiguity and contradiction that drew her to Rachel's character:

Lady Grange was impossible and her husband was fed up with her drunkenness and her little shenanigans. He couldn't divorce her so he sent her to the other part of Edinburgh, but she simply wouldn't accept it. She would get drunk and stand outside his house and as his dinner guests arrived, you could just see her, she was probably nursing a bottle on her cheek and shouting at them. (...) She was so wonderful and fascinating to write about, but difficult too. For a long time I didn't know what to write about her, nothing seemed of substance. There were some people who were very censorious because they thought I shouldn't have (...) portrayed [her] as a difficult drunken woman. I suppose they thought she was unattractive, well, she was. I hope she was because otherwise it wouldn't work. At first she is interesting and then you don't like her but you sympathise with her. (...) It was ridiculous that she [would be imagined] as a sweet little thing, [because] she wasn't. ²³

For Glover, the complexity of Rachel's character defies a simplified interpretation that the virgin/strumpet dichotomy often implies. Although Rachel's initial appearance and behaviour indicate that she is an alcoholic, rude, and quite possibly mad, it would be wrong to interpret her character merely in those terms. Rachel and Aneas's conflict can be interpreted as more than a mere conflict between a prodigal and a man of God. It is based on the misunderstanding of social codes. Different societies are based on different values and, accordingly, social codes onto which those values are inscribed will also differ. Social codes are such characteristics as appearance, dress, behaviour, gesture, gait and language-use. The assumption is that the investigation of practices of

these social codes in different societies and different periods could prove productive for researching the interrelation between a society, identity and language. It is important to note that although these codes differ in the same societies in different periods, they are conveyed in such a way that they construct, as Cameron proposes, 'different kinds of social relationships' ²⁴ and, therefore, 'hearers are expected to understand the rules' ²⁵ underlined in such relationships. Cameron goes further to assert that 'prescriptions about women's behaviour, including their verbal behaviour, played a crucial part in the ideological struggle that took place in early modern Europe between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie'. ²⁶ This idea corresponds to Jones' assumption that the conventional picture of the feminine as silent and obedient, that we are acquainted with today, is fairly new and bourgeois in origin. On the other side of the coin was the verbosity of a court lady who was expected to entertain both female and male courtiers. This verbosity, which Cameron refers to as 'the free speech', had its strict rules, and a court lady like Rachel would be balancing on a thin line between being entertaining and outrageous. In those terms, Isabel and Rachel represent two different models of the feminine - the bourgeois and the aristocratic - both constructed and made normative by men. These models are based on the codes which define what is acceptable. Individuals who transgress them in order to '[construct] an identity in defiance of cultural prescriptions, or for failing to construct a proper identity at all' ²⁷ are punished. Penalties for such a transgression range, according to Cameron, from being labelled as eccentric to being ostracized, persecuted or locked up and stripped of their rights. Aneas's rejection of Rachel's behaviour may therefore be seen as the result of her failure to comply with the nouveau bourgeoisie model of the feminine as a silent group.

ANEAS: Everything about her is disgusting and ungodly. Her language, her appearance - (act I, scene iv, p. 47)

Aneas believes Rachel is ungodly because her language is too rude and loud (she curses and talks about sex), and her appearance is too uncomely (her clothes are in rags and her hair is uncombed). He fails to understand that Rachel cannot accept the reality of Hirta because such an acceptance would erase any trace of her identity and most certainly her sanity. The only way to preserve both is to hold to her class identity symbolised in a few tattered memorabilia of her former status. For example, she refuses to dress like the local women and prefers to wear her old city clothes, the dishevelled and ragged appearance which provokes Aneas's outrage. Another status symbol that she clings to is the straw chair which is *the only chair* on the island. At the beginning of the play, Aneas is annoyed when he is informed that Rachel has taken away the chair, and exclaims: 'And the Minister is not fit for it?'.²⁸ This sets the scene for the contest for power between Aneas's puritanical minister and Rachel's aristocratic lady. Furthermore, Rachel's contempt for the church is both an attempt to express an aristocratic superiority, and a genuine disappointment with the falsity of the system which allows such grave violation of women's rights as she has endured.

Aneas' rejection of Rachel is not only a rejection of one person, it is the rejection of women as a group. It is the whole group as such which should be punished for their *difference*, or at least controlled so that this *difference* does not become threatening to the existing order. Rachel's identity, like the identities of other characters in the play, can be perceived through the integration of language, class and gender. Her rejection

by the male-dominated system, symbolised by Aneas, is a penalty that she must pay for constructing her identity in defiance of prescribed social codes. Through this rejection Aneas is also turning back on his mission as a minister. Isabel points this out to him in what is going to become her first open sedition against the authority of the husband and the priest.

ISABEL: (*After a mutinous pause*) You will minister to eighty-odd islanders, and ignore the one soul who needs you?

ANEAS: My work is to catechise the natives and lead them to salvation.

ISABEL: (*Not directly to him*) The islanders will pray and praise till dawn. Whether there is a minister or no. But the Lady Rachel hides in the shadows outside. Afraid. (act I, scene iv, p. 48)

Isabel begins to see that the state and the church, both embedded in Aneas through his status of husband and minister, are the oppressive agents. At this point she no longer fears Rachel, but rather sympathises with her situation because Rachel has been betrayed by both. She has been ostracized by her husband and his circle because she refused to accept her husband's double betrayal - betrayal of his country through his connections with Jacobites, and betrayal of herself through his endless affairs with the maids. Instead of accepting the knowledge and standing by her husband like a loyal suffering wife, she chose to speak out against it in public. At that moment she became dangerous for both her husband and his Jacobite friends. She was labelled as a nuisance according to the double standard on which the eighteenth-century patriarchal system was based, which saw women as being utterly subordinate and denied to them the knowledge and liberties that their husbands would have taken for granted. Her struggles to enter the realm of knowledge and experience reserved for men drives her to reject the roles of loyal wife and mother. However, although she gets a glimpse of

this reserved knowledge, she fails to master it. Instead of a means of liberation this knowledge will become her jailer. After having been punished by expulsion from her class system, Rachel finds it impossible to adjust to the new circumstances. To adjust to the Gaelic rural universe of Hirta Rachel would have to go below her station, as opposed to Isabel, who sees the contact with the local inhabitants and their pagan culture as a liberating force.

Glover establishes the identities of Rachel and Isabel in antithetical ways. As has already been stated, Rachel puts her needs and aspirations before duty and refuses her sexual energies to be 'either suppressed or subsumed by a devotion to children, or channeled into other kinds of strongly-felt activities'.²⁹ She refers to her children as vipers, she does not see her maternity as something about which she might have had a choice. It was imposed on her by her husband who wanted an heir, while she 'never wanted children'³⁰ and 'would have given the son to have the husband back again'.³¹ Glover undermines the conventional perception of marriage and childbirth as gratifying to a woman by showing them as oppressive agents. She goes further to show that Rachel's downfall is partly due to her attempt to transgress the boundaries of a traditional concept of romantic love. As in *The Seal Wife*, here Glover also skillfully employs elements of Scottish folklore to comment on the popular concept of romantic love and demonstrate the falsity of its double standards. In the case of *The Straw Chair* she uses an old Scots ballad 'The demonic lover' and a folk story about the Bachelors' Stone. In act I, scene iv, Rachel is shown drunk and perched in the position of a storyteller on a slope in front of Isabel and Aneas' house, singing the fragments of the ballad 'The demonic lover'. Her confusion of Aneas' evening speech

about hell and damnation with the ballad's verses, represents a clear allusion to the suppression of women's sexuality under penalty of being ostracized by male-dominated society.

RACHEL: (*Singing*) But hold your tongue, my dearest dear,
Let a' your follies a-bee.
I'll show you where the white lilies grow
At the bottom o' the sea. (act I, scene iv, p. 49)

The white lilies and the bottom of the sea are usually associated with death, but in this case they symbolise a different kind of death, sexual ecstasy. The lover is calling his lady to partake in his pleasure, but her participation is silenced, passive. The man is the initiator and the doer, while the woman is the passive receiver. Because she cannot express herself through it the sexual act becomes a repressive agent. Rachel subverts this by placing a woman in the central position, and marginalising Aneas into the position of an object of Isabel's budding desire:

RACHEL: Do you like him? Don't you want him? Do you? (*She grows ever louder, Isabel fears Aneas will waken*) Don't you? Do you?

ISABEL: Ssssh.

RACHEL: Well? (*Louder again*) Well?

ISABEL: Yes. Yes. Times I think - yes.

RACHEL: Then hoist up your semmit and get on with it! Get on with it!

Isabel turns away.

So rigidly pious!

ISABEL: No! No. But how can I - hoist my semmit - when HE is talking all the while about the sanctification of the spirit? He is disappointed in me.

RACHEL: He hasn't tried you yet!

ISABEL: I don't think he likes me. I don't think he wants me.

RACHEL: (*Without too much concern*): Ask him! Men lie with less conviction when they have no clothes on. (*She looks at Isabel for a long moment*) You have not seen him naked?

Isabel makes no reply.

Nor any man?

No reply necessary.

Isabella whats-your-face, you have led a sheltered life!

(*Not singing now, so much as quoting from the song - mockingly:*)

'Til grim, grim grew her countenance

And drumlie grew her e'ee.

ISABEL: Ay, drumlie! I haven't minded six of my uncle's bairns for naught! If you don't hold your weesht - I'll - I'll -

Falters, remembering Rachel's title.

RACHEL: Two weeks married! You should be a-bed with him now! Sweetly seduced? Deliciously debauched? (*Louder*) Or roughly ravished!

ISABEL: Be quiet! Be quiet! You will wake him!

RACHEL: How does a bed of stone and straw for 'a fortunate match'?

ISABEL: (*To herself*) Bed? It is more like a well!

RACHEL: What does the man - of the cloth - in the bed?

ISABEL: The damp grows on the stones thicker than feathers!

RACHEL: Ay, but - how does he grow?

Pause for a reply which is not forthcoming.

What are you? - A mouse? What runs in you? Water? (act I, scene iv, pp. 51-2)

Rachel prevents Isabel from hiding under the mask of duty and piousness, and makes her realise that she has to place her needs before her husband's needs. In this example, Rachel assumes male discourse to win the upper hand in the communicational hierarchy with Isabel. Her statements are provocative and aggressive, as is her choice of the subject of conversation, sex, which makes Isabel increasingly unsettled and awkward (she tries to hide this behind her silence). Rachel's aggressive interaction finally prompts a reaction from Isabel who abandons her hesitant defensive position for a moment and shouts at her. There is in Isabel's discourse an indication of a definite departure from the set formulae of her husband's pious speeches. She has already begun to question his myopic inability to accept Rachel on the one hand, and to

understand the pagan beliefs of Hirta's locals on the other. Her language has acquired an assured, inquisitive manner, and she is in the process of re-examining the beliefs that have been imposed on her through her upbringing. This is symbolised by her decision not to wear stockings and shoes while on Hirta, as well as by the fresh interest that she shows in her body.

ISABEL: I could do with some scales. Soft ones, like a snake's. (*She is admiring an imaginary covering of scales on her body.*) I could glide over rocks... and slither in the sea. Would you love me, dressed in scales? ... Aneas? Would you hold me closer if we were both created new and innocent with scales? ... Would you slither in the sea ... around me ... with me? (act I, scene iv, p. 48)

Glover employs another sexual metaphor, a snake, to indicate Isabel's erotic awakening. A body *dressed in scales* is a body aware of its sexuality, it is a liberated body reconnected with nature, and as such it becomes a representation of *the other* which is *feminine*. Isabel's daydream about being 'created new and innocent with scales' is an invitation to Aneas to enter the *feminine* and to become part of it, unhindered by social codes which prescribed open expression of sexual desire as unacceptable and disguised it behind the socially unthreatening concept of romantic love.

Another folk element used to disclose the falsity of romantic love is Oona's story of the Bachelors' Stone, the cliff that all men who wish to marry must first attempt to climb. Isabel is engrossed in Oona's story about a foreigner who fell off the cliff while attempting to woo her. Oona does not think the story to be particularly romantic. She does not feel flattered by the foreigner's attentions, on the contrary, she cannot see

anything attractive about the world outside Hirta. This is indicative of the idea that romantic love is a bourgeois concept based on a romanticised picture of either the past or exotic and remote rural areas. Rachel destroys Isabel's romantic perception of the story by ridiculing it.

ISABEL: He loved you? He died for you!

OONA: (*Unhappy about it, but not guilty*) But I never wanted that! I never noticed how he felt. He was just one of the foreigners - with foreign clothes. And a bad foreign smell.

RACHEL: Aha!

OONA: I remember he could not eat our eggs. They made him all swollen.

A pause.

RACHEL: That was what killed him! Unbalanced by his own fart!
(*She walks further off*) (act II, scene iii, pp. 92-3)

She further ridicules a happy ending often associated with the concept of romantic love, where 'a fortunate match' or 'a marriage made in heaven' with a good eligible man is bestowed upon a woman as a reward for her obedience:

RACHEL: I would have stood on the stone - once. I was sure of him - then. God - but he could rouse me. There was a tremor in his voice: 'Come here, Rachel - come to me!' Oh!

ISABEL listening, all ears. RACHEL notices - a beat. A change of tone.

..... But the catch was in his voice always, every day. When he called for his broth, or said he was for London. He never took me there. Mouth too loud. No learning. (act II, scene iii, p. 93)

Rachel uses a storytelling mode to draw Isabel into her story. Once she has done so, she changes her speech mode in order to destroy Isabel's expectations of a romantic 'and they lived happily ever after' love story between her and her husband. What follows is a bitter description of a woman's reality in eighteenth-century society where she is denied the possibility to either learn or function independently in society. Love

has become duty, like providing food for her husband, or waiting patiently while he is away on business. Rachel's transgression is an overwhelming love for her philandering husband in a society where sexually active males are commended as being virile and potent, while equally sexually active females are repudiated as nymphomaniacs, 'inebriate, violent, dangerous', ³² uncomfortable wives.

RACHEL: I loved him! (...) - loved! Wanted! I would have loved him always. But which mask should I love? He had several - none of them looked on me. Once he got me, he no longer wanted me. When he carried me off to Edinburgh, we loved - laid - laid again and laid!

ANEAS turns away from her in disgust - wanting to hear no more from her - Wanting nothing to do with her.

..... But sometimes, even then - the honey time - he'd turn from me as if I wasn't there. Wouldn't speak. So - I'd speak to him - and speak! (*Directly to ANEAS - but as if her is LORD GRANGE, for the moment to her he IS LORD GRANGE*) Speak to me - speak! (*Strong gesture of frustration - as if wanting to shake ANEAS/GRANGE physically - perhaps actually does so*) Speak, damn you - speak! (act II, scene iv, p. 101)

Rachel's speech exemplifies the way in which woman's need to acknowledge and accept her sexuality, as an expression of her identity, has been blanketed by the needs of a man. Furthermore, woman's very existence has been silenced and made invisible. Rachel has been abducted, hidden on Hirta and proclaimed dead in the eyes of the world. Her every attempt to communicate her existence to the outside world, through the form of a letter she is trying to send to her relative in Edinburgh, is hindered by the Steward and his men, who symbolise oppressive societal agents. Finally the Setons are relocated as a punishment for Isabel's attempt to help, and Rachel herself has been denied ink and paper, which is the only means by which her plea may be heard. The final image of the play finds her distraught and disorientated,

writing/reciting/rehearsing an imaginary letter which will never leave the invisible walls of her prison.

Isabel's emotional growth coincides with Rachel's crumbling mental state, which is evident from the way the two characters use language. At the beginning of the play, Isabel speaks in brief sentences, or half-sentences, and carefully avoids conflict with her husband. Rachel, on the contrary, is loud and rude and purposefully shocks other characters in her struggle for attention. She has verbal duels with Aneas and Oona in her attempt to assert herself, or simply to be heard. Under her influence, Isabel for the first time moves towards a deeper understanding of Rachel's situation, and also her own, and towards a solidarity that will end in an ultimate rejection of codes imposed on her by a societal order. This rejection is symbolised by her refusal to dance with the Steward and departure to Boreray against her husband's wishes. Towards the end of the play, Isabel adopts a more assertive language mode, she is more talkative, and considerably more self-opinionated, while Rachel shows increasing signs of weakness. The shift in their positions is shown in act II, scene iv, when during a little drinking party she and Isabel struggle for the chair, the symbolic representation of that power. Isabel wins by knocking Rachel onto the ground but at the same time she also damages the chair. The damaging of the chair symbolises Rachel's crumbling health and lessening faith in delivery from Hirta. It is at this point, while watching Isabel run to the boat which will take her to Boreray, that Rachel first admits that Isabel might have enough strength and courage to change her position.

RACHEL: (...) You'll never make it! (...) By God, but you might! If you don't throw up my physique first! Queer bit of a lass! May never worse be among us! (act I, scene iv, p. 98)

The relationship between the two women can be seen as a transfer of knowledge and power from an elder generation to the younger, and from a woman belonging to an old order to a woman belonging to a new bourgeois order. In this sense, Isabel's stay at Hirta can be interpreted as an initiation into the world, by being handed over experience and knowledge from the previous generation. In an interview by Evelyn Ahston-Jones and Dene Kay Thomas, Mary Belenky describes interesting research published in *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*³³ about the ways in which women gain knowledge in the world where they have been muted and kept outside history by a dominant and male-dominated class. Rachel struggles to be initiated into the circle of those who control the knowledge, but once obtained, this knowledge will prove a reason for her downfall. When she threatens to use her newly gained knowledge she is proclaimed mad and removed from society to a remote place where this knowledge is of no use to her. Belenky outlines several epistemological perspectives on women's ways of coming to knowledge such as *silence*, *received knowledge*, *subjective knowledge*, *procedural knowledge* and *constructed knowledge*. *Silence* is experiencing of the self as voiceless and unable to receive or generate knowledge. *Received knowledge* is perception of knowledge as absolute and always in the possession of 'authorities'. *Subjective knowledge* is distrusting authority and understanding knowledge as personal, originating within oneself. *Procedural knowledge* is perceiving of knowledge as objective and rationally derived, though subject to multiple perspectives. And finally, *constructed knowledge* is understanding of knowledge as 'constructed' in the sense that the knower acknowledges and takes responsibility for shaping knowledge. In terms of *The Straw*

Chair, these perspectives can be broken down into the various stages in a vertical progression of Isabel's emotional and intellectual emancipation.

The first stage, silence, begins when she first comes to Hirta. Isabel is a young innocent woman whose unawareness of the world outside Edinburgh makes it difficult for her to adapt to the quite different situation that she finds in Hirta. She despairs when she first sees their new accommodation, which consists of a bed of stones, a straw chair and a single cooking pot. She is unwilling to accept the cultural differences she encounters and is terrified of Rachel. On a more personal note, she is a young bride married to a middle-aged minister, whose unawareness of sensuality makes her awkward in the presence of her husband. Most of the time she treats her husband as if he were her uncle, or even the father she lost in childhood.

The second stage, received knowledge, is reflected in Isabel's upbringing which conditions her unequivocal acceptance of her husband's authority. She is mostly silent in front of Aneas, or speaks only when she is spoken to. She tries to please and at one point even despairs in her belief that due to her inexperience she has failed her husband's expectations.

In the third stage, subjective knowledge, Isabel is faced with Rachel's confession. There is never a doubt in Isabel's mind that Rachel may have lied to her. On the contrary, Rachel's story triggers a latent knowledge of her own subordinate station. She realises that the world picture that she has been brought up with is false, and she begins to turn to herself for answers.

The fourth stage is procedural knowledge. Isabel is now able to acknowledge a difference within her (expressed through her budding sexuality) and a difference outside her (expressed in her acceptance of the pagan universe of St. Kilda). She opposes Aneas' authority and takes Rachel's side against him in the act of smuggling her letter onto the Steward's boat. Furthermore, Isabel opposes him by going to Boreray against his wishes in a final symbolic act of emotional and intellectual liberation.

Finally, the fifth stage is constructed knowledge. After her return from Boreray Isabel is much stronger and certain in her own strength. Her assimilation of the Gaelic cultural universe of Hirta is completed, she has learnt the Gaelic language, and her language mode has changed as well. Her sentences are longer and more self-confident. She is fully prepared to face the consequences of her actions. Rachel's letter has been found and the Steward's men have returned to relocate herself and her husband. She accepts this in the full knowledge that her actions were justified and further persuades Aneas to speak against the Lord Advocate and in Rachel's favour once they return to Edinburgh. She is aware that any attempt on their side will be hindered by the dominant group against Rachel's delivery; however, she believes that it is her responsibility as a woman and a minister's wife to speak up against the violation of Rachel's rights. At this point, she differs greatly from the shy silenced woman who first came to the island, and her emancipation is completed. The stages of Isabel's emancipation through knowledge are closely linked with her linguistic emancipation

from a silenced woman to an equal participant in linguistic communication with the other gender.

From this it may be concluded that Isabel has not only grasped the knowledge that has been given her, she has also managed to master it, unlike Rachel who was unable to go beyond the third stage (subjective knowledge). Once Rachel acted based on the belief that the knowledge within her, the awareness of her identity as expressed through her sexuality, and the knowledge outside her, the social codes and political games in the middle of which she has been thrown, are in conflict, she was unable to retain control over either and was destroyed by both.

To this point, the analysis has concentrated on the relationship between the two main female characters in the play and the ways in which Glover constructs their identities. There is also the third female character, a middle-aged local woman from Hirta named Oona, who differs considerably from Isabel and Rachel.

As a member of a Gaelic speaking rural community, Oona is twice removed from the other characters, due to her rural origin and to her language. She acts towards the other characters with detached placidity. They are foreigners in her world, with a different smell, appearance and eating habits. She speaks their language, but she does not pretend that she understands them. Indeed, even when she communicates with them, she always uses Gaelic to express emotions, such as when she speaks of her dead lover. English is reserved for everyday communication.

Oona is associated with Rachel through duty. She has been appointed her keeper by the Steward, and the bond between the two is indisputable and based on the mixture of power-struggle and solidarity. Her reverence for Aneas is equally detached, in that he represents the order which has colonised her world and imposed upon it its language and religion. She and her fellow villagers have found a way of keeping an equilibrium by respecting the colonisers' order while still preserving their ancient customs. Oona's character defies any explanation through individualism. She is represented as a part of a community whose harsh everyday reality can be endured only through solidarity, mutual understanding and respect.

Isabel is able to reach her in a way that none of the others can because she is the most susceptible to the Gaelic culture that Oona represents. Her ability to adapt to their way of life and to learn their language surpasses that of Aneas' because she herself is in a subordinate position to the dominant culture. Unlike Rachel for whom the Gaelic world of Hirta represents a prison, Isabel finds the pagan customs and placidity of its inhabitants liberating. She is particularly fascinated by an ancient custom which allows women to spend some time on their own on the island of Boreray, away from children and work.

Aneas, on the contrary, wishes to change Hirta. He has come to the island on a mission, led by the impression that it is in need of spiritual liberation from the ancient darkness in which it has been immersed, only to find that he has brought the darkness with him. He is serving as the oppressing agent of a dominant class, rather than serving the needs of the local people. At the beginning of the play, Aneas is portrayed

as a powerful, self-righteous, 'stickit' minister with undisputed authority over everyone and everything. As the play progresses, his authority lessens in our eyes, the locals do not have any real need of him, and Isabel also slips out of his control. The only person who truly needs his help, Rachel, is denied it. Aneas readily colludes with the image of Rachel as a strumpet, and an uncomfortable wife, because the acknowledgement of her truth would undermine the social reality his beliefs are based on and force him to reexamine them. The moment when he enters the *feminine* by acknowledging Rachel's truth is the moment of realisation that he too has been a pawn in the hands of the powerful.

ANEAS: I believed it was the Highlands that were sunk in darkness. But there is evil everywhere. Lord, who is blind but thy servant? And I closed my eyes. Kept them shut fast. Only what could I have done? Father in heaven, what would you have me do?

RACHEL: (*Not speaking or looking at ANEAS now*) Destroy the letters. But Bridget knew. Destroy Bridget. Send Rachel out of town. Tell the world she is half-crazed. But I would not stay away. I haunted Niddrie Wynd. Every night I screamed: Murder! Roll up, see the pious Lord of Murder! Oh, I repent! I repent my mouth, my screaming. I should have kept it shut - sought revenge like you seek pleasure - in the dark, in the slime.

ANEAS: (*His mind is reeling from all this - and its implications on his own behaviour*): The plan to spread the gospel in the North. I am part of the plan; I was to bring Christ's sweet mercy from the Lowlands. From Edinburgh... where the powerful and the glorious are capable of anything! And rid themselves of anyone. (act II, scene iv, pp. 102-3)

This shift in Aneas' position is followed by a shift in his language. Initially he speaks in the set formulae of church language, which further complicates his communication with the other characters, and especially his relationship with Isabel. Following the progression of the play's action his language becomes simpler, everyday, until at the

end of the play he abandons the church parlance completely and accepts more informal expressions.

In *The Straw Chair* identity is explored from three perspectives. From the gender perspective Glover explores the position of women and the consequences of double standard on the characters' relationships, through Rachel's removal from society by her husband, and through the development of Isabel and Aneas' relationship. From the class perspective, she investigates the miscommunication based on a power-struggle between the aristocratic class, represented by Lady Rachel, the bourgeois class represented by Aneas and Isabel, and the Highlands' peasants represented by Oona, and exploitation of the latter by the former. She also shows the misunderstandings between the characters which rise from cultural differences between separate microworlds within Scottish society, namely those of the Lowlands vs. the Gaelic universe of Hirta. All of the three perspectives are intricately shown through the various language modes that the characters use.

2.5. *Bondagers (1991)*

Four women meet at the Hiring Fair and are hired to work as bondagers at the same farm. The play follows the everyday life of Liza, Sara and her daughter Tottie, Jenny, Maggie and Ellen during one agricultural year, from the Hiring Fair to the kirk. The stories of the six women are gradually revealed, Liza is an orphan. Her father recently died, and her brother moved to Canada after Ellen rejected his offer of marriage. Ellen married her master instead, in pursuit of a better life. However, at present time, she is unhappy because she cannot conceive. She seeks help from Sara, a single mother with a disabled daughter, who is an epitome of folk wisdom with her placid nature and knowledge of traditional folk medicine. Maggie is a hind's wife who resents the fact that Liza has come to live in their house, and the two women constantly bicker. Liza develops an interest in a farmhand, Kello, and flirts with him at the kirk. However, she refuses to go with him to the Coldstream brig, the local lovers' meeting place. Tottie, Sara's fifteen-year-old daughter, who

admires Liza and is constantly trying to draw Liza's attention to herself, goes instead, and is raped by Kello. In her innocence, she believes that they have 'buckled up', according to an ancient custom by which a man and a girl sleep together before being wed in order to determine whether the girl can conceive, and pursues Kello further, which is used by the other farmhands, who take advantage of her. She is accused of being loose, and Ellen warns Sara that if the girl is not kept under control, the master will have no other option but to dismiss them both. The events reach their boiling point when Tottie finds Kello up in the barn with another woman and accidentally causes his death. She is accused of murder, and despite an attempt on the part of the women to help her, is taken away. At the end of the play, the master's lease is not renewed and all of them have to move on, to another Hiring Fair, and another farm.

There is hardly another piece of writing which could better corroborate claims by those feminist theorists who insist that women are a separate class in their own right than Glover's 1991 play *Bondagers*. Set on a Borders farm during one agricultural year, the play depicts the life of six women of different age groups and circumstances in mid-nineteenth century agricultural Scotland. The play begins at a February Hiring Fair, where the four bondagers are hired by the hinds to work at the Blacksheils farm. At the farm, the six characters meet for the first time and relationships are slowly established among them. *Bondagers* represents a departure from the previous two plays in two senses. Firstly, here Glover diverges from the naturalistic structure of *The Seal Wife* and *The Straw Chair*. The play still retains a two-act-structure favoured by Glover; however, here the two acts are constructed as almost separate independent entities, both beginning with the carefully choreographed chorus sequences which represent the two different cycles of nature, which further symbolise two cycles in the characters' lives, both concluding in equally open-ended ways. The dominant mode is still that of a storytelling, however, in the past this mode has been limited to either using a folkloric element as a minor element in the development of the play's own story, for example the Silkie legend in *The Seal Wife*, or as a

metaphorisation of the elements of a folk tradition, as in the folk ballad about 'The Demonic Lover' and the folk legend of the Bachelors' Stone in *The Straw Chair*, or a dehistorisation of certain factographic events, notably the life of Lady Rachel of Erskine, in order to re-examine women's herstories. In *Bondagers*, however, the storytelling mode intrudes into the structure and language of the play in the sense that the play unveils itself through the rhythm and imagery of a folk tale.

Secondly, it represents a further step in her exploration of women's experience, and more importantly, diverse female discourses, through the removal of the male characters from the stage. The three male characters who are going to figure strongly in their everyday life - Ellen's husband maister Elliot; Maggie's husband Andra, one of Elliot's hinds; and a young ploughman Kello - are introduced only through the women's conversation. For this obvious absence of men from the stage the play has been occasionally criticised as anti-male, however, this is an exaggeration. On the contrary, men are as present in the play as women. Although not in person, they are present in the women's conversation and in the back of their minds all the time. They pull the invisible strings to which these women's lives are attached. Glover suggested during the interview that to give the men space on the stage would only cloud the main issue on which she wishes to focus, namely to show the consequences of economic, political and sexual exploitation of women's labour in the mid-nineteenth century Borders from a singularly female perspective. In this sense *Bondagers* may be viewed as a sort of a folklorised history with the difference. Glover's modification of the naturalistic structure of the story enhances the view that what is about to be laid open before our eyes is a different kind of history, a hidden herstory of women which has

long been modified through the lens of the prevalent histories of mankind. In the same way, the silencing of the male discourse enables Glover to give voice to a multitude of diverse female experience, long ignored, in order to draw our attention to what Zenzinger refers to in his article 'New Wave' as a discrepancy between 'the traditional view of what constitutes fulfillment in woman's life and a woman's wish for self-determination'.³⁴ For this purpose, Glover chooses a particular class of women, the 'bondagers'. The bondagers were the women workers at the great Border farms in nineteenth-century Scotland who were hired by the male farm workers, or the hinds, and who lodged and fed alongside the hinds' families. The system of bondage is explained early in the play by Ellen, a former bondager who married the maister of Blacksheils.

ELLEN: 'Don't be ridiculous, Ellen', says the maister. 'We can't do away with the bondage. I can't employ a man who hasn't a woman to work with him. One pair of horse to every fifty acre, one hind for every pair of horse, one bondager for every hind. That's the way it's done', he says. 'I'm all for progress', he says, 'but I won't do away with the bondage', he says. 'We need the women. Who else would do the work? ... Women's work, for women's pay.' (act I, scene x, p. 144)

The bondage has often been compared to slavery, and one can certainly find similarities between the Hiring Fair and the slave fairs in America. When Maggie complains that the hinds usually hire the bondagers on account of their looks and concludes that the women should be hired by a farmer and not the hinds, Liza replies sceptically that whoever makes the choice, they'd still pick the bondagers by their looks, pinch their arms and gawp at their legs. The appalling conditions in which the women were forced to live are indicated by Jenny's claim that only by sleeping with the children is

she able to avoid her hind's unwanted advances, and by Liza's confession to Ellen that she is afraid that Andra might violate her. The bondagers were considered cheap labour and they were expected to do both housework and field work. However, although they worked alongside men, their jobs were still considered inferior, 'women's work', and were paid less than men, 'women's wages'. There is an ironic resonance to this attitude in Liza's and Ellen's description of hard labour done by bondagers.

LIZA: (*Or all, taking phrase by phrase, in turn. She is kirtling up her skirts, putting on the sacking apron*) Redd up the stables, muck out the byre, plant the tatties, howk the tatties, clamp the tatties. Single the neeps, shaw the neeps, mangle the neeps, cart the neeps. Shear, stook, striddle, stack. Women's work.

ELLEN: Muck. A heap of it - higher than your head. Wider than a house. Every bit of it to be turned over. Aired. Rotted. Women's work.

LIZA: (*Forming the dung*) Shift the sharn, fulzie, muck
Sharn, sharn, fulzie, muck
Shift the sharn, fulzie, muck... *etc.* (act I, scene x, pp. 144-5)

When Elliot prepares a speech for the Ploughman's Soiree, he advocates the six pound raise for the men, but there is no one to speak for the women. As Liza points out, the women are not invited to the meetings. In act I, scene x, the women bicker about the wages that they are given.

MAGGIE. I've barely a shilling a week to spare for her.

LIZA. I earn my keep!

JENNY. A shilling! Is that all we're worth?

MAGGIE. Barely a shilling for all that food -

LIZA. - I'm aye starving -

JENNY. Even a horse can't work without food!

MAGGIE. She takes the bed from my bairns, and the warmth from my fire -

LIZA. (*Furious*) Where d'you expect me to -

SARA. (*Restrains her*) She doesn't mean you - (*To MAGGIE*)
 Maggie! - (*To LIZA*) It's the bondage she's angry at!
 MAGGIE. Flighty, giddy bits o lassies! Pay no heed to the hind, or
 his wife!
 LIZA. I'm not *your* servant!
 MAGGIE. I'm not *your* washerwoman!
 SARA. This'll never do now, fraying like - tinklers! (act I,
 scene x, p. 143)

Here Glover shows how the economic exploitation on the part of the patriarchal societal forces can cause fissures in the women's solidarity.

It is not only their work which is considered less important, but also themselves as persons. For example, Kello's only punishment after violating Tottie is being 'douked (...) in the trough, and kicked (...) round the yard', ³⁵ but he does not lose his job because '[h]e's good with the horses, he's a hero with horses'. ³⁶ His philandering is overlooked by the steward and everybody else because of his skills, and because he is a man, while Tottie is looked upon as an easy woman who was 'asking for it' by both men and women. After Kello's death, when Maggie tries to intervene on Tottie's behalf in front of the maister, her reasoning is cut short and she is silenced, demonstrating that man's justice is not woman's justice in the same way that man's language has power to silence woman's language.

Glover depicts the women in this play as both individuals and a chorus-like group, a community. For example, in one of her stage directions she indicates that '[i]n their large hats and headhankies tied over their chins, they are not individually recognisable'.

³⁷ This duality is expressed through language, when in character the women speak in prose, while when part of the group their speech is more rhythmic, almost operatic

through their interjections, interrupting each other or speaking as a single voice. In support of this proposition the opening scenes of the acts I and II will be compared in which the women's voices initially build up as the chorus to define the time and place of action and set the pace for the events that follow, before dividing into the individual characters.

I.

LIZA, SARA, JENNY, TOTTIE in the market place, for the Hiring Fair. MAGGIE at home.

VOICES. *(All the cast, cutting in on each other's phrases, some of the phrases can be repeated. Low whispers at first, growing louder)*

The Hiring, the Hiring, the Hiring...
 Hiring Fair, Hiring Fair, Hiring Fair...
 What a folk/What a crowd/What a carts/What a
 people/What a noise!
 Ye get a' the clash at the Hiring.
 Ye get a' the fun at the Fair.
 I'm blythe to see ye
 Tam/Andra/Jenny/Meg/William/Neil/Geordie/Joe/Jane/
 Jack.
 What fettle? Fine fettle. How's the cow? Doing
 grand. How's a' wi you? How's the bairns... and the
 cow? How's the wife... and the cow?
 Did you ken about Davie/Jockie/Tam/Sandy/Nathan/
 Ned/Mary/Betsy/Bob?
 What's the crack?/Heard the crack from Langriggs/
 Redriggs/Smiddyhill/Smiddyford/Horsecleugh/
 Oxencleugh/Whitehas/Blacksheils/East Mains/Westlea.

During this LIZA is wandering, jostled by the crowd, looking for a place to stand.

VOICES. *(These phrases more distinct)*

The Hiring, the Hiring Fair.
 First Monday in February.
 Coldest Monday in February.
 Eight o clock. Soon as it's licht.
 See the farmers bargain wi the hinds.
 See the hinds bargain wi the bondagers.
 See the bonny bondagers stand in a row.

LIZA has chosen her place, waits to be hired. SARA and TOTTIE are also standing now together, waiting to be hired.

FIRST VOICE. (*Low whisper*) The coldest Monday. Soon as it's licht. (*Louder, taunting*) No bondager worth a puckle's left after ten o'clock.

LIZA. (*Outwardly defiant - not in answer to the voice, and never speaking directly to the audience*) I'll be gone long afore ten. Bound over. Hired. See if I'm not. Broad shooters, short back, strong legs.

SARA. Stand here Tottie, stand still now. (act I, scene i, p. 127)

II.

It is dark, at first we barely see the characters on stage. The different sections of chorus here come fast on top of each other, sections actually overlapping - until MAGGIE and SARA speak individually, in character.

A SINGLE VOICE (*Tune: traditional*)

Up in the morning's no for me

Up in the morning early

When a' the hills are covered in snow

Then it is winter fairly ... (*Last line more spoken than sung*)

VOICES (*In a spoken round*)

When a' the hills are covered in snow

Then it is winter fairly...

As the round finishes, voices still saying 'Winter... winter... winter...'

A burst of noise: A rattle of tin cans, or sticks clattering together, or a stick drumming on tin - or something like. (It was Hogmanay, not Hallowe'en, when kids went guising in the borders.)

A CHILD (*Calling out in a mock scary way*) Ooooooh!

A CHILD (*Calling out, merry*)

We're only some bits o bairns come oot to play

Get up -' and gie's oor Hogmanay!

Some laughter, CHILDREN's laughter. The rattle/drumming noise. If possible an impression of the laughter fading to distance - as if the CHILDREN have retreated, and the ADULTS, and adult worries, are coming to the centre of the stage.

VOICES (*Singly, in turn*)

Cold wind: snow wind

Small thaw: mair snaw

The snow wreaths

The feeding storm

The hungry flood

SARA's and MAGGIE's speeches here more definite, more individual.

SARA: The dread of winter. All summer long, the dread of it. Like a nail in the door that keeps catching your hand. Like a nip in the air in the midst of the harvest.

A VOICE (*Whispery, echoey*) Cold wind: snow wind.
 MAGGIE: (*Brisk, busy*) There's beasts to be fed, snaw or blaw!
 VOICE: Cold. Ice. Iron.
 MAGGIE: (*With a certain satisfaction*) A green yule makes a fat
 kirkyard! (act II, scene i, p. 155)

In the both scenes the language abounds in powerful aural and visual imagery, it is full of associations. In the first scene the constant changes in the tone and sound pitch of the chorus speech creates an impression of the outer hustle and bustle of a marketplace and the inner emotional turmoil of the women who have come to that marketplace to offer their labour. When the first voice breaks away from the chorus, it is not to express an individual thought, but to reflect the feelings of all of the women present. Similarly, Liza's answer is yet another externalisation of a communal feeling of hope and insecurity. Glover emphasises in the stage directions that Liza's lines are not in answer to the first voice. Both voices are the representation of conflicting emotions within the mind of a single entity, the universal *Other*, symbolised in the bondagers. Sara's sentence directed at Tottie cuts into this and the other voices break away from each other to form individual characters.

Similarly, in the second scene, the change in the rhythm from song to recital marks the change in the mood from the silent whiteness of snow covering the fields to the burst of life on the farm in preparation for Hogmanay celebrations. Back again, the focus shifts from the feverish expectations of the forthcoming celebrations, to fears of bad weather and the hunger which can threaten the farmers' everyday existence. Here too the chorus melts into the individual voices and indicates the beginning of the action. Both scenes are created in the form of a traditional folk song where the chorus parts alternate with the individual voices. Glover's use of folk tradition does not stop at the

structure and the language. It is strengthened through rich visual images, such as elaborate dance and movement choreography. These images indicate the shift in the mood, time and location, and provide a strong representation of the sense of community and solidarity shared by these women.

Throughout the play the interaction between the characters is balanced between naturalistic language, when the characters speak in individual mode, and metaphoric language when they act out the role of a chorus. In the latter case they can be perceived as the metaphors for the land on which they work. In that sense, the misuse of the women's labour becomes symbolic for the misuse of the land on the part of the man who exploits and ravishes it.

This link between the land and the characters, and their position in the patriarchal society which uses the land, is picked up in the language that they use. It is a language rich in metaphors and rural phrases which reflects the everyday life of peasants in the Borders. For example, as a hind's wife, Maggie is initially placed high in the communicational hierarchy. She speaks in short exigent statements, usually either voicing her opinion on a subject or barking orders to Liza and Jenny. Liza constantly challenges her societal and linguistic authority. In act I, scene ii, Maggie assumes an assertive, commanding manner of speech when she reprimands Liza, telling her that if she thinks that a bondager's life is difficult, she should wait until she gets married and has children. Liza's refusal to accept marriage and motherhood as the only appropriate future baffles her.

MAGGIE. That's what you wed for - bairns!

LIZA. Why?

MAGGIE. Why? Why! (*Can't think what to say, can't see why she can't think what to say*) Why, they keep the roof over you when they're older, that's why. They keep things going. Wull and Tam will soon be half-yins, getting halfpay, and when they're grown there'll be Jim and Drew, and the girls will make bondagers in time. Meg can work with her daddy. Netta can work with Wull or Tam. It'll be grand., We'll can take our pick at the Hiring. Ay, we'll be easy then. Soon enough.

LIZA. All in the one house - all in the one room? And what about him (*Indicating the cradle*), he'll not be grown, and Rosie's still wee - and how many more? Easy! You'd be easier without.

MAGGIE. Without what?

LIZA. Bairns.

MAGGIE. Fields aye need folk.

LIZA. Bairns for the maister?

MAGGIE. What's a hoose without bairns?

LIZA. If you think they're so bonny, what are you greeting for?

MAGGIE. Me?

LIZA. What do you greet for nights?

MAGGIE. No, not me - it must have been one of the wee ones - Rosie cries -

LIZA. 'Bake, cook, sew, spin, get wed, have bairns.' Natter, natter. Nothing about fighting him off in the night!

MAGGIE. (*A gesture: meaning 'you're hawering'*) Now... where was I... what was I going to do next...

LIZA. I hear you! I hear you nights! Do you think I don't hear you?

MAGGIE. Now, what was I doing...

LIZA. You sit on by the fire, hoping he'll sleep. You fetch moss from the peat moor to stuff up your legs. I've seen. (act I, scene xi, pp. 146-7)

When Maggie tries to find reasons why a woman should marry, her assertive speech mode is reduced to emotional rubble by the ruthless honesty with which Liza exposes her words as the mere repetitions of cultural imperatives that have been imposed on the women by the male-dominated society.

The verbal conflict between Maggie and Liza is interrupted by Sara who calls Liza away on an errand. Sara is the ultimate mother figure, the Earth mother. She is also a

bearer of the tradition through her strong sense of belonging. In act I, scene viii, Sara tells a story about her man's departure to Canada and about her reasons for staying.

SARA. Patie loved the baby. She was a queer bit babby, wheezy and choky. He knew she wasn't quite natural. But he loved her, you mustn't think he didn't, she was ours. He was restless, though. He wanted - something, adventure, Canada. It was me said no, I wouldn't go. This parish was my calf-ground: Langriggs, Blackshiels, Billieslaw; the fields, the river, the moor up yonder with the lang syne rigs. Patie loved the land. 'Her'. But maybe I loved her more. When it came to the bit. When it came to Greenock - and even there the land seemed foreign. And the sea; and the ships. A sad, sad place. A great crush of folk, all quiet, and a highland lass singing. Then a voice cried out, loud: 'Hands up for Canada! Hands up for Canada!' A rushing, like wings, all the hands held high. And the baby screamed like she'd never grat before. Such a stab in my heart it made the milk spurt from me. I couldn't step forward. I couldn't go on. And Patie couldn't stay. I knew he couldn't stay. He crossed the ocean; I looked for the carter to take us back home. Patie Wabster. I think of him every day, many times every day.

MAGGIE. Fourteen years! He'll have bairns of his own now.

SARA. I hope so surely. He was made for happiness, Patie.
(act I, scene viii, p. 140)

It is a hidden history that lies behind the canonised history of the emigration of the poor and the deprived from the rural parts of Scotland to the wilds of Canada, where many of them will lose their lives in an effort to help build their colonisers' empire. It is a herstory, told by a woman in a composed, unruffled voice. As opposed to Maggie's aggressive speech mode, Sara's tone is much more subdued and reconciliatory. She is the voice of reason in the same way that Tottie is the voice of the irrational. There is another duality in the interpretation of the characters of Sara and Tottie. Namely, Sara is the voice of the past, of the ancient, ignored by patriarchal canons, tradition which links the concept of womanhood with the creative power of the land. Tottie, on the contrary, is the voice of the future, emphasised by the fact that

she actually sees the future in her hallucinations. On the surface, Tottie reminds one of a child who has not as yet been socialised. She is playful, and she can be naughty. However, upon a careful analysis of her behaviour, it is evident that she is actually a mirror in which the other characters' inner feelings and desires are reflected, stripped of the mask of self-control. This is what disturbs Liza when she first meets Tottie, and why she feels uncomfortable when Tottie is around.

Ellen is the wordiest of them. Stuck between the two worlds, she is also stuck between the two languages. Sometimes she tries to sound educated, particularly when she describes the life in the Big House, and then suddenly she lapses into her old speech mode revealing her bondager origins.

ELLEN. Sweet wheaten bread, and tea, and cream and sugar and ham! All this for breakfast! Brought by a servant girl better dressed than I ever was till now. A table like snow, a floor like a looking-glass; china, lace. Great wide windows to let in the sun - to look out on the fields. Every field fifty acres square. Hedges trim. No weeds. No waste.

(...)

SARA. (*Fearful of ELLEN's gown*) Mind now, Tottie.

ELLEN. I wear this one to take tea.

SARA. There's no tea here, Nell!

ELLEN. I have just taken tea - at Langriggs.

An awkwardness. She sits down very carefully. TOTTIE gapes at her happily. SARA motions to TOTTIE to start work.

TOTTIE. (*Still with her eyes on ELLEN*) Ellen Rippeth-that-was. Like a lady now. She sits like a lady.

ELLEN. It's the stays. Can't bend forrard. Can't bend back. I'm tied up every morning - let loose at bedtime.

TOTTIE. Who ties you - the maister?

ELLEN. (*To SARA*) D'you mind Betty Hope? The maister's auld mither hired her for my maid.

SARA. She's got the sort of face that comes in useful for a wake.

ELLEN. Nae crack from Betsy. It's hot in here.

(...)

ELLEN. By, it rained for the flitting. I watched the carts from the window, coming down the loan. Bung fu': beds, bairns, clocks, dressers, grandpas, geraniums - a'thing drookit. (act I, scene vi, pp. 136-7)

Although Glover wrote *Bondagers* mainly in Scots, rather than the standard English, not all of her characters speak Scots. At times, Ellen mixes the standard English and Scots dialect which reminds of a rural dialect from the Borders, such as when she says that she 'can't bend forrard'. The form that she uses is impure, it is a mixture of the standard form 'can't bend forward' and the Scots form 'cannae bend forrard' or even 'kenne bend forrard'. The same inconsistency applies with 'Nae crack from Betsy', which should say 'Nae crack frae Betsy'. The language experts might dismiss these inconsistencies as a mere failure to restore the authentic nineteenth-century rural Borders dialect in its pure and accurate form. Indeed, Glover has occasionally been criticised for the form of Scots that she uses in the play. However, the proposition is that in the above samples of Ellen's utterances the amalgam of English and Scots has been devised deliberately to show Ellen's state of confusion about her identity which derives from her feeling that she has fallen into the gap between the two very different worlds. Glover herself confesses that she has not used authentic 1860s Scots simply because there is no such thing as a reliable record of the authentic rural 1860s Scots. The only records available nowadays are letters and diaries which, according to Glover, can only offer clues, firstly because people do not talk the same way that they write, and secondly because there is a greater chance that the preserved examples of written Scots from that period would come from educated speakers rather than the rural folk. With regard to her use of Scots dialect in the play, Glover stresses its

dramatic function, which is to help the spectators believe in the time, the place and the characters.

It is honest: I do not use any Scots that the bondagers might not have used. It is not very broad Scots because I am not writing solely for a Scottish (far less a Border) audience. And if it is inconsistent - well, the Scots I hear around me every day, and the Scots that I use myself, is inconsistent: we say 'hoose' or 'noo' or 'sleekit' in one sentence, and 'house' or 'now' or 'sly' in another; and this for many, and definite, reasons: the mood, and rhythm of the sentence (...) ³⁸

Glover has made the most of the sharp resonant musicality of the Scottish language to depict the mood and the rhythm of the sentence in *Bondagers*. The patches of dialogue in prose alternate with songs, dance and monologues in the storytelling manner. The result is an ultimate celebration of sound and movement whose almost operatic quality enables Glover to break away from the limitations of naturalism and infuse a dreamlike, impressionistic thread into the play's structure.

By exploiting the opulent linguistic, rhythmic and auditory characteristics of the existing Scots dialects, Glover manages to give a voice to the female characters, and show their respective positions in the class hierarchy at an 1860s Borders farm. Going back to the earlier argument about the economic exploitation of female characters in the play, Glover goes further to show a far more devastating form of exploitation, that of the women's bodies. Jenny and Liza discuss the hinds' sexual abuse of the bondagers. Tottie is raped by one of the farm-hands and abused by the others, and all the women are seen in connection with marriage and childbearing. Ellen is desperate because she cannot conceive and she turns to Sara for help, and asks her whether she

knows of the whereabouts of a certain herb that might cure her condition. Sara informs her that the herb has been lost due to Elliot's changes to the land site.

SARA: That's the only place we ever knew of. But they don't grow there now. The maister had a wall built, some years ago - to keep the river from flooding the fields. He had the bank raised. They moved tons of earth. And build a braw dyke, and a paving on the bank so we could wash the linen. (...) Nobody thought. We used the leaves all the time - your mother was right, we used them for a' thing... well... (*Partly her sensible opinion, and partly trying to comfort ELLEN in her dismay*) not so much for babies, Nell, some women tried, but I don't -

ELLEN: I could have tried. I could have tried.

SARA: Nobody thought to save any of the roots. Nobody gave it any thought... (act II, scene vi, p. 167)

In order to build something man must destroy - by building the wall Elliot might have destroyed his chance of an heir. Similarly, in his eagerness to improve his farm, he has neglected his wife. Woman, on the contrary, does not need to destroy in order to create. For this reason her life-giving ability is linked to that of the land. This further means the subordination of both to the man who controls their creativeness. The land gives birth to crops for the maister, the woman gives birth to children for maister. Like *The Seal Wife* and *The Straw Chair*, here Glover depicts the concept of motherhood as something imposed on a woman rather than natural to her. Ellen says that she only wants a child for Elliot, while Liza rejects everything that has to do with marriage and motherhood and is eager to prove that she can keep working alongside the best of men.

LIZA: I'll not take the arle from the first that comes,
I'm only going to a well-kent hind.
I can shear come harvest. I'm good with the horses.
I'll fettle the horses - but not your bairns.
I'll redd up the steading - but not your house,

I'll work a day - but not in your bed. (act I, scene i,
pp. 126-7)

Liza is a representative of a younger generation of bright independent women who refuse to be defined in the traditional terms and who wish to assert their individualities outside domestic chores. In this sense it is possible to perceive Liza as selfish, however, her selfishness rises from a sense of self-preservation. She is a single young woman in a world where the women depend on the men. This is her first hiring, her father died recently, and her brother emigrated to Canada. She must fend for herself and for that reason she hides her naivety and innocence behind the mask of hardness. They show occasionally, such as when she is genuinely surprised by Jenny's warning about the possibility that a hind might ask for sexual favours, or in her childlike belief that if she looks in the mirror at midnight she will see her sweetheart. There is a contradiction here because while rejecting marriage and motherhood, a part of her believes in the concept of romantic love epitomised in the old traditional ballad 'Woo'd and married and a'' that she and Jenny sing at the beginning of the play.

In *Bondagers*, as in the previous two plays, Glover exposes the falsity of the concept of romantic love, popularised in fairy tales and folk songs, and she further shows marriage as based on economic and sexual exploitation. Procreation is seen as the main end of any marriage. A tradition of 'buckling up' before 'calling the banns' is mentioned as the means of ensuring that a prospective bride is not barren, and a couple usually gets married after the girl conceives. Of course, the custom leaves plenty of space for abuse. For example, if the girl did not become pregnant, it was usually believed that it was her and not the man's fault. Ellen blames herself and not Elliot for

not conceiving. Her feeling of guilt is further hoisted by the sense that she is a former bondager who has betrayed her own class by rejecting the love of Liza's brother in favour of a prosperous marriage. Her marriage with Elliott is supposed to be a kind of 'fortunate match' that Lady Rachel referred to in *The Straw Chair*, but Ellen soon discovers that instead of liberation, her new status only offers a different type of bondage, and her sense of uselessness is magnified by an alleged inability to conceive.

ELLEN: (...) I'm useless in that great house! Dressing up; pouring tea. His mother minds the house, Betty Hope minds me. I'd shift the sharn if it'd help; mangle the neeps, feed the beasts. I watch him at his desk, writing, counting. He doesn't even know I've come into the room. He breaks my heart. I only want it for him, I'm plump, I'm greedy, I'm healthy! Damn it, why can't I swell? (act II, scene vi, p. 166)

Ellen feels lost because the world she has chosen to live in is completely different from the world she has been brought up in. When she first appears in the play, she is still adjusting to her new station. She learns how to use a fan and walks like a lady, and she wears lady's clothes, but she uses the first opportunity to loosen her corset and sits in the hay in an unladylike fashion, and she still uses the language of a bondager. It has already been mentioned that Ellen feels caught between the two worlds. On the one hand, while her husband's mother refers to her as 'new blood', she will never be completely accepted by her husband's class. Her function is mainly to satisfy her husband's need for an heir, the function that she has failed to fulfill. On the other hand, by marrying her maister she has ceased to belong to the community of bondagers, and although she tries to retain the link they treat her with half-respect and half-derision. When Elliot loses the lease of the land, she is as much a loser as the rest of them. The last link with home has been severed and the future looks uncertain. Her

husband wishes to go into politics, and she will have to adapt to quite a different life, without the comfort of the familiarity of a farm and the bondagers that she has once enjoyed. She tries to keep Sara, as a remainder of her past, and a confidante, but Sara refuses to leave the area, 'these fields are [her] calf-ground', ³⁹ the only roots that she is left with after Tottie has been taken away from her.

Sara's character is reminiscent of Agnes from *The Seal Wife*. Like Agnes, her main qualities are selflessness and a devotion to her child. Like Agnes, she feels that she belongs to a certain place. Faced with the choice between remaining in the parish and leaving for Canada with her lover, Patie Wabster, she has chosen the former, because unlike Patie who 'wanted the world. [She had] to bide still, [she had] to stay where [she was]'. ⁴⁰ She is distinguished from the other characters in the play because unlike them, and very much like Agnes Grey, she has to learn to let go in order to survive. Despite being a cottar wife, an unwed single mother, her hard work and douce nature has earned her respect from others, especially from Liza who is drawn by her strength and courage. Not all condone her choice, Maggie is particularly venomous in her attack on the tradition of handfasting and the fact that Sara was 'left holding the bairn'. ⁴¹

At first it may seem that Maggie's attitudes reflect those of the establishment. She believes that bearing children is a woman's duty, but only within the sanctimony of marriage. When referring to Patie's absence she tells Sara that 'a kirk wedding would have bound [them] both'. ⁴² However, she also admits that her husband Andra would have never consented to marriage if she did not trick him into it. She is particularly

anxious about Liza. She envies Liza's independence and is afraid that the young bondager might take her man away from her. Through her bickering with Liza her righteousness is stripped off gradually to reveal a tragic figure whose life has been reduced to hard labour and bringing up the children. The children have become her aim in life, but they also represent the life threat. Without the benefits of modern medicine, childbearing was very difficult, particularly when one considers all the other everyday chores that are assigned to the women. Maggie is always shown on the stage doing the chores, whether it is minding the children, or cooking, washing, cleaning, spinning, etc. The toils of life leave little time for romance, and Andra's advances have become something Maggie fears rather than anticipates.

The fiercest criticism of the concept of marriage as exploitation of women is seen in the example of Sara's daft daughter Tottie who is raped by a ploughman after the harvest celebration. Her mental condition deteriorates as her head swirls with all the romantic stories that she has heard from the other girls, and in her childlike innocence she believes that she has been handfastened with Kello. She enjoys the attention she receives from the men, without realising what the consequences of her conduct might be, and enjoys the fact that it is she who manages to go to the Coldstream brig with Kello and not Liza. She follows Kello around in the belief that he will marry her, and is puzzled by his constant rejection. When she catches him with another woman it is not her intention to kill him, his fall is an unfortunate accident, nevertheless, she is punished for it. Or rather, she is punished for being *different*. In a certain sense Tottie represents the land. Glover mentions the comparison between Tottie and the land in her afterword to the 1995 edition of *Bondagers*: 'Soon she stood for the land, and not

long after Kello came to stand for our (sometimes criminal) carelessness'.⁴³ Tottie has become the voice of the land, the voice of its timelessness. In her hallucinations she has seen the 'lang syne' ploughman:

TOTTIE: (...) There was a man there, but it wasnae him.
 Twixt me and the sun. Just the one man.
 He was stood in the rigs, the lang syne rigs.
 'A week's work done in a day', he cries.
 'We don't need you now!
 We don't need folk. We don't need horses.
 Machines without horses.
 We've plenty bread now', he cries.
 'Too much bread'.
 He was pleased. He was laughing.
 But I wasnae feared. (*She's laughing a bit, it pleases her*)
 For he wasnae the ghost.
 I was! I was the ghost! (act II, scene ii, p. 157)

This prophecy is indicative of the women's herstory in the sense that it depicts its absence from the approved history. It also shows a concern that in the modern times of horseless machines and progress, the bondage will be long gone, and with it the very existence of these women's stories will become ghostly, invisible to and forgotten by the dominant culture. The Elliotts will move to another parish, the bondagers will go to another hiring fair. Nothing much has changed at the end of the play to improve the women's situation. Even Liza, humbled by the experience, realises that the only way to survive is to accept the system. At the end of the play she abandons the image of a hard woman behind which she has been hiding and asks Sara whether she would teach her to spin. If she learns how to spin she will be able to get work at the Big House which is 'good work on a rainy day', and one gets one's meat 'sitting down in the kitchen'.⁴⁴

There is another possible interpretation of Glover's words and Tottie's speech, the one that implies that both women and men are affected by the self-perpetuating patriarchal social structure. True, men's wages are higher, but only slightly, and still far below the required minimum, hence the farmers' meeting. True, Kello's transgression remains unpunished, while Tottie is bullied and abused for her unconventional behaviour, but his ultimate death and her arrest come to represent the collapse of a whole class system of bondage. Ellen's husband will lose the farm, and consequently all of his employees will lose their jobs. At the end, there are no winners, only individuals willing to survive.

Notes.

Chapter Two - Women like Islands: Plurality of Female Discourse in Three Plays by Sue Glover

- ¹ Susan Triesman, 'Transformations and transgressions: Women's discourse on the Scottish stage', Chapter 8 in *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958: A Critical Handbook* (eds.) Trevor R. Griffiths and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), p. 130.
- ² Alexander Selkirk is the main protagonist of Glover's play *An Island in Largo* (1981), quotation from the transcript of the interview with Sue Glover, October 1996, p. 5.
- ³ Susan Triesman, p. 130.
- ⁴ Sue Glover, *The Seal Wife*, a manuscript, p. 28.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ⁶ E. Ashton Jones and D. K. Thomas, 'Ways of Knowing: A Conversation with Mary Belenky' in *Women Writing Culture*, p. 93.
- ⁷ *Idem.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- ¹¹ E. Hirsch and G. A. Olson, 'Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray' in *Women Writing Culture*, p. 187.
- ¹² Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language: a Sociolinguistic Account of Sex Differences in Language* (New York: Longman, 1986), p. 10.
- ¹³ *Idem.*
- ¹⁴ Sue Glover, *The Straw Chair*, a manuscript by courtesy of the author, p. 23.
- ¹⁵ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 167.
- ¹⁶ Cecily Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* (London: WWSL, 1909), p. 117.
- ¹⁷ a concept, introduced by Deborah Cameron in her book *Verbal Hygiene* (1995) which implies ordering language, while at the same time observing that language can stand for other kinds of order, such as e.g. moral, social and political.
- ¹⁸ Dale Spender, *Man-Made Language* (London/Boston/Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 57.
- ¹⁹ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, p. 194.
- ²⁰ Sue Glover, *The Straw Chair*, p. 18.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- ²³ Interview with Sue Glover, October 1996, pp. 9-10.
- ²⁴ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, p. 187.
- ²⁵ *Idem.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ²⁹ Jenni Calder, 'Heroes and Hero-makers: Women in Nineteenth Century Scottish Fiction' in *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol. 3, Nineteenth Century, (ed) Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988).
- ³⁰ Sue Glover, *The Straw Chair*, a manuscript, p. 41.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- ³³ Blythe VcVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* in Evelyn Ashton-Jones and Idene Kay Thomas 'Composition, Collaboration and Women's Ways of Knowing: A Conversation with Mary Belenky in *Women Writing Culture* (ed.) Deborah Tannen (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 82-3.
- ³⁴ Peter Zenzinger, 'The New Wave' in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (eds.) Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (Edinburgh: EUP, 1996), p. 130.
- ³⁵ Sue Glover, *Bondagers in Made in Scotland, An Anthology of New Scottish Plays* (London: Methuen Drama, 1995), p. 160.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

³⁸ Sue Glover, 'Afterword' to *Bondagers* in *Made in Scotland, An Anthology of New Scottish Plays* (London: Methuen Drama, 1995), p. 179.

³⁹ Sue Glover, *Bondagers*, p. 177.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 140.

⁴² Idem.

⁴³ Sue Glover, 'Afterword' to *Bondagers* in *Made in Scotland, An Anthology of New Scottish Plays* (London: Methuen Drama, 1995), p. 179.

⁴⁴ Sue Glover, *Bondagers*, p. 133.

Chapter Three

Monsters and Shadows: Female Desire and Female

Creativity in Three Plays by Liz Lochhead

3.1. *About the playwright*

Elizabeth Anne Lochhead was born in Motherwell on 26 December 1948. She began to write poetry while at Glasgow School of Art and she combined writing and part-time teaching for the following eight years. In 1972 she published her first collection of poems, *Memo for Spring*, followed by *Islands* (1978). During a one year stay in Glendon College, Toronto, on the Scottish Arts Council's first Scottish-Canadian Writers' Exchange in 1978, she began writing *Blood and Ice*, her first full length play, produced later in 1982 at the Traverse Theatre Club, Edinburgh. In 1981 she was commissioned to write a revue entitled *True Confessions* for the Tron Theatre Club. Her other stage work includes *Sugar and Spite* (collaboration with Marcella Evaristi and Esther Allan, 1978), *Goodstyle* (an art history revue, 1980), *Tickly Mince* (collaboration with Tom Leonard and Alasdair Gray, 1982), *Disgusting Objects* (1982), *A Bunch of Five* (collaboration with Dave MacLennan, Dave Anderson, Tom Leonard and Sean Hardie), *The Pie of Damocles* (collaboration with Tom Leonard, Alasdair Gray and Jim Kelman, 1983), *Shanghaied* (1983), *Red Hot Shoes* (a dance fantasy, 1983), *Same Difference* (1984), adaptation of Moliere's *Tartuffe* (1984), *Dracula* (1985), *Nippy Sweeties: The Complete Alternative History of the World Part I* (1986), *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), *The Big Picture* (1988), *Them Through the Wall* (collaboration with Agnes Owens, 1989),

Patter Merchants (an adaptation of Moliere's *Les Precieuses Ridicules*, 1989), *Jock Tamson's Bairns* (a devised piece, 1989), *Mozart and Salieri* (1990), *Quelques Fleurs* (1990-1), *Damages* (1988-93), *The Magic Island* (1993), *Cuba* (1997), *Perfect Days* (1998), *Britannia Rules* (1998), as well as a number of collections of poems, radio and TV plays and film scripts. Liz Lochhead lives in Glasgow.

3.2. *About this chapter*

Liz Lochhead's road to theatrical creation has been slightly different from the rest of the playwrights chosen to be discussed in this project. An art college graduate, she realised early in her student days that she could not express her interest in narrative through painting, and especially through the current artistic trend towards abstract painting.

Once I got a bit of facility with my drawing, I didn't know what I wanted to do with it. The kind of drawings and paintings that I felt were the right kind to do didn't give me, personally, satisfaction, because they didn't have a narrative. I'm not really interested in abstractions.¹

After graduating from the Glasgow School of Art she went on to write poetry that was going to earn her critical acclaim for its visuality and presence of a narrative element. The critics were not equally generous when, after having proved herself through a series of collections of poems, short monologues and collaborative revues, Lochhead began to experiment with dramatic structure. It was in 1978, while she was staying in Toronto on the Scottish Arts Council's Scottish/Canadian teaching exchange programme that she began to write her first full-length play *Blood and Ice*. In her

article 'Scripts and Performances', Anne Varty mentions, amongst others, Mary Brennan's and Cordelia Oliver's mixed reviews of the play and complains that 'it [was] disappointing that both critics retreat[ed] first into what they [knew] about Lochhead before they [could] address the work that [crossed] the boundary from poetry to drama'.² One may go even further to state that Lochhead's work does not just cross the boundary between these two associated performance genres, it blurs it. When discussing Lochhead the playwright one cannot overlook Lochhead the poet lurking in the shadows. The narrative component has always been significant in Lochhead's poetry, and her poems are primarily meant to be read aloud in front of an audience. Having taken into consideration Lochhead's own claim that at the time of writing her first full-length play she did not consciously 'think in terms of drama, dramatic structure'³ but was instead drawn into it through her continual exploration of different performing styles, her dramatic work can hardly be separated from the representational element of her poetry. In other words, the structure and the imagery of her poetry will be strongly reflected in her playwriting. For example, each of the three plays discussed in this chapter - *Blood and Ice*, *Dracula* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* - is divided into two parts that can be analysed like two stanzas of a poem which differ in length and style. Lochhead has often pointed out her dissatisfaction with structural incongruities in her plays, often further complicated through her regular use of metatextuality as a distancing device from the stage realism. She marked those incongruities as a clear foible on her part, and indeed there are theatre critics, such as afore-mentioned Mary Brennan (*Glasgow Herald*, 8 May 1984) and Cordelia Oliver (*The Guardian*, 27 August 1982), as well as Gareth Lloyd-Evans (*The Guardian*, 13 April 1981), who would agree with her on that point. However,

there are also those - such as George Mackay Brown who praised the orality in her writing - who recognised those incongruities as an interesting characteristic of Lochhead's style. She, far from being interested in mimetic theatre, argues that any representation 'is always a product of ideologically influential context and choice'.⁴ In order to enable her audience to perceive reality as fluid, changeable and interruptable, as opposed to being fixed, Lochhead uses various alienation devices such as metatextuality and binary oppositions.

Through interpolation of quotations by other authors into her texts and adaptation of other authors' works, Lochhead strives to achieve reinterpretation and/or change of meaning of those texts. For example, in *Blood and Ice*, Mary Shelley recites fragments from Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel', while in *Dracula* Lochhead interpolates long passages from Bram Stoker's novel. In both cases metatextuality is used for the purpose of a reinterpretation of the Romantic construction of women's sexuality as *unheimlich*, *uncanny* and *demonic*.

In view of the second above-mentioned distancing device, Robert Crawford suggests that Lochhead's entire opus can be defined on the basis of splits or binary oppositions, such as *female/male*, *Scottish/English*, *working-class/middle-class*, *performance/text*, *poetic/dramatic*, *dialogic/monologic*, *heteroglossic/homoglossic*.⁵ Crawford goes on to propose an interesting notion, namely, that these binary oppositions should not be taken in isolation 'but as operating simultaneously in Lochhead's work'.⁶ In this way, they become a viable device, firstly, of estrangement of the stage reality from everyday reality and, secondly, of exploration of *split subjects* and *plural identities*, which

constantly recur in Lochhead's writing, and which will be referred to here in terms of the psychoanalytic and linguistic theory of Jacques Lacan.

Lochhead uses the notions of split subjects and plural identities to indicate the split in the female subject as opposed to the traditional representations of a woman and the feminine on the stage which have often been, in Bakhtin's term, monologic, namely fixed and static. Through the use of binary oppositions, symbolised in e. g. shadows, mirrors and pictures imagery, Lochhead exposes the falsity of the mimetic representation of women in terms of a sisterhood who have got universal experience, and indicates that different or rather plural identities exist within the same gender group. This is in congruence with Cameron's and Tannen's theories which accept, to paraphrase, the existence of various subgroups within two sexes, in the biological sense, or genders, in social and cultural sense. These subgroups depend on socially constructed experiences based on the individuals' various cultural and material backgrounds. The perspective that Lochhead is offering is that the female imagination seeks to readdress the traditional perception which represses and even demonises woman's sexuality in literature. It further seeks to do away with the *un* in unfamiliar, uncanny or *unheimlich*, which represents, as Sigmund Freud implies in his article 'The Uncanny', 'the token of [women's sexual] repression'⁷ by the patriarchal authorities. One may therefore conclude that, through her use of metatextuality, binary oppositions, split subjects or plural identities, Lochhead attempts to readdress and re-explore the authorship of a female narrative, whether her characters' (i. e. Mary Shelley, Mina Westerman and Queen Mary) or her own, and to redefine in such a way their identities. In an interview she admitted that she had been haunted by Goya's

epigraph 'The sleep of reason produces monsters',⁸ which implied that an absence of reason unleashed fantasy which was the dark side of human nature (symbolised by monsters). If one attributes male properties to the rational side (reason) of human nature, and female properties to the irrational side (imagination), then the Romantic notion of the demonic quality of woman's sexuality becomes clearer. However, Lochhead refutes this logic and offers another explanation of Goya's epigraph, the one to which S. J. Boyd alludes in his article 'The Voice of Revelation' and which implies that any attempt 'to force things to be too rational [is to allow] the dark and untidy bits [to] well up and manifest themselves in quite concrete ways'.⁹ Speaking in Goya's terms, the repression of woman's sexuality will create monsters. This might be a reason for Lochhead's interest in the sadomasochist, dark side of a personality which she refers to while speaking about the character of Mary Shelley: 'So I was interested in people's darker natures, what makes somebody who has all the ingredients of a rational life turn to darkness. It's suppression. The more you try to suppress the dark bits of yourself, the more they well up.'¹⁰ It seems to Lochhead that the only way woman can redeem herself is to recognise and accept those aspects of herself that have been considered taboos, 'monsters'. One way of accepting the 'monstrous' aspects of oneself is also to redeem the taboo words which signify them. This leads back to Lochhead's heteroglossic, or in Crawford's terms, the two-faced use of language. The complex amalgam of poetic and naturalistic language, West coast of Scotland idioms and Scots and English registers, alongside Lochhead's continuous use of the imagery of mirrors, pictures, monsters, sea and blood are used to emphasise the notions of split subjects and plural identities that she is set to explore in her plays.

This chapter is set to explore the ways in which Lochhead deals with these two notions in terms of the four themes that have been identified in Chapter One and investigated in Chapter Two, namely the themes of woman's position in society, a woman's perception of female identity, interactions with other male and female characters, and female sexuality and the possibility of self-expression and self-assertion through biological/artistic creation. Lochhead's use of language and narrative will further be explored, as well as the use of metatextuality with relation to the above mentioned four themes. These issues will be analysed on the basis of examples from her stage plays *Blood and Ice* (1978-82), *Dracula* (1985) and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987).

3.3. *Blood and Ice* (1982)

In the play, Mary Shelley tells the story of her illicit relationship, and later marriage, with Percy Shelley, in retrospective. She also gives an account of her relationship with her stepsister Clare and the infamous Byron. The plotline follows Mary from her early motherhood, the summer spent in Byron's summer house in Switzerland, when Mary begins to write her first novel, *Frankenstein*, to the subsequent deaths of her children, Shelley, and Byron.

In her article 'Scripts and Performances' (1993) Anne Varty describes the process in which the play *Blood and Ice* has evolved from the original version *Mary and the Monster*, produced at The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in March 1981 when it was all but booed from the stage by theatre critics, to subsequent 1982 and 1985 versions in which Lochhead developed the binary opposed imagery of blood and ice as the key imagery in the play. Although Varty regards the 1985 version as structurally and

ideologically most accomplished, the 1982 published version will be used in this analysis because it is most revealing in view of the issues that are discussed here.

From the very beginning *Blood and Ice* was conceived as a play about female creativity and the relationship between a woman artist and her creation. Here Lochhead voices her concerns about the genderisation of language and the acceptability of female creativity, burning issues that have often been expressed by a number of (non)feminist theoreticians from both linguistic and literary angles. Lochhead expressed these concerns in a letter to Emma Tennant on 28 January 1980, at the time when she was writing *Mary and the Monster*:

What exactly is the relationship of self to others and image in a woman; the problem of the Female Muse for the female writer, or do we have to discover, or re-discover some 'masculine principle' within ourselves to be whole, can we have a Male Muse? ... or must we squabble with parts of ourselves, live with our Bad Sisters...¹¹

Of course, it is not proposed here that Lochhead has consciously applied in her writing the Coates' androcentric rule which places men and women, and subsequently male and female writers, at the opposite ends of the linguistically positive/negative or acceptable/unacceptable axis with women writers regularly being on the negative/unacceptable end. However, the idea might have been present in the back of Lochhead's mind, in her need to readdress the position of a woman, and indeed a woman writer, from a radically different female perspective, to genderise language, and to explore the ways in which female creativity does or does not differ from male creativity.

This further prompted Lochhead to explore female imagination and sexuality as expressions of female identity, and to reject what she sees as their repression in both literature and everyday communication. In introductory Chapter One, Virginia Woolf's concern has been mentioned about the expression of a woman's experience being in language which is homoglossic, fixed to serve the needs of a dominant culture (which in Lochhead's plays has been represented as white, middle-class and patriarchal) and evidently inadequate for her purpose. In Woolf's view, which has later been revived and advocated by a number of feminist theorists, woman is immediately rendered powerless in the communication process in which her use of language is seen as powerless. Lochhead goes a step further and perceives not only woman's language but also woman's body as a taboo or, in Freudian terms, *unheimlich*. In 'The Voice of Revelation' S. J. Boyd quotes from Lochhead's poem 'Song of Solomon' ¹² in which she attacks the Romantic model of the feminine based on idealisation and adoration, and uncovers an uneasiness with which both males and females refer to female genital organs. In the poem, Lochhead plays with the verses from the Bible's 'Canticle of Canticles'

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb:
honey and milk are under thy tongue ...
Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth
not liquor... (4.11; 7.2) ¹³

so as to comment on the implausibility of a male perspective based on the idealisation of woman. Her version is slightly more Boccaccian in tone and refers to the alienation of woman's body by both males and females as something so shocking and monstrous that it should not be even thought of, let alone talked about:

never think of the whiff of
sourmilk from her navel
the curds of cheese between the toes
the dried blood smell of many small wounds
the stink of fish at her crotch.¹⁴

It is Lochhead's view that the negation of woman as a sexual being and an attempt to turn little girls 'into sugar and spice and all things nice'¹⁵ gives rise to the belief that there is something morbid, even sadomasochistic about women's sexuality. In *Blood and Ice* she paraphrases the well-known nursery rhyme so as to question what women's sexuality is really like: 'What are little girls made of? Slime and/snails and.../What are monsters made of?'.¹⁶ Mary refers to her body as 'a slimy thing',¹⁷ and there is an allusion to androgyny in her reference to little girls being made of 'snails', snails usually being considered as a metaphor for male genitalia. All this leads to the belief that Mary feels uncomfortable about her sexuality. She is, according to McDonald and Harvie, very much 'a conventional woman, disturbed by behaviour that does not fit in with the social codes of her class'.¹⁸ Later in the play, this belief is clearly observed in Mary's open expression of disgust with her sexuality: '(...) I found that in my arms I clasped... my own Shelley, hot and living, with all his senses and his five straight limbs, and my heart sickened at the workings of my loins'.¹⁹ The fifth limb is a metaphor for the phallus which Mary is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by in the same way that she is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by 'the workings of [her own] loins'. This goes back to Goya's epigraph, as quoted by Boyd, and Lochhead's suggestion that the repression of women's sexuality by patriarchal societal authorities creates a female fantasist, who in turn 'creates the sexually aggressive monster'.²⁰ Boyd goes so far as to argue that this sexually aggressive

monster, although created by the female imagination, has male properties, and corroborates his argument by comparing it to another metaphor for masculinity, that of a fast moving train. In Boyd's terms, this male monster, whose language consists 'of sexual threat or boasting of sexual conquests [has] invaded and conquered the female space (...) in a way that might be seen as matching the violent penetration by the train'.²¹ The 1982 version of the play sees Mary Shelley's monster reflected in the character of Lord Byron whose boasting of sexual conquests and literary provocations Mary finds both sexually and ideologically threatening. However, if one accepts that the monster Lochhead writes about may be a metaphor for both female sexuality and female imagination, or rather creativity, then Mary's reference to her sickness with the workings of her loins metaphorises both her fear and rejection of physical arousal and her fear and rejection of her artistic imagination. In both cases, the monster is man-made - the image of Shelley's naked body is the source of Mary's physical excitement, and, furthermore, Victor Frankenstein is the creator of the Monster in her story. The link between the two is emphasised in the 1982 version by Lochhead's decision to use the same actor to play Shelley's and Victor Frankenstein's roles. Masculine principle is seen as a repressive force, which leads to the conclusion that the bestowing of male properties on the monster in Mary Shelley's story further indicates her concern about whether a female author should accept a Male Muse as an underlining force of her creativity, or whether it is possible at all for a female author to have a Female Muse.

Mary's ultimate rejection of a male controlled social/creative environment may indicate Lochhead's choice of the latter. Indeed, it is implicit in Lochhead's writing that the concept of the feminine, and female creativity, can only be freed from its repressed

state through the breaking of taboos. In order to accept and liberate oneself, one should learn to know oneself, to love those parts of oneself that one has been taught to hate. In other words, one must turn the Freudian concept of *unheimlich* into *heimisch*. In view of this, *Blood and Ice* sets out to explore the feasibility of the societal, sexual and creative liberation of women.

Because Lochhead perceives stage realism as recreating fixed and static interpretations of the concepts of womanhood and femininity, she has set out to find non-realistic stage representations of the feminine. In the process, she has exploded a realistic structure through the use of diverse non-naturalistic textual and theatrical devices. McDonald and Harvie (1993) ²² further mention Lochhead's use of metatextuality in order to show how in *Blood and Ice* Lochhead destabilises the perception that Mary Shelley's novel has a fixed meaning. Lochhead's use of metatextuality in the play relies on two devices, firstly, the juxtaposition of her narrative with scenes from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and secondly, the interpolation of excerpts from Shelley's and Coleridge's poems.

The discussion of the juxtaposition of different narratives in *Blood and Ice* inevitably goes beyond a mere supplementation of Lochhead's narrative with what might be seen as her adaptation of the scenes from Shelley's novel. In accordance with her polemic about the relationship between a woman author and her creation, Lochhead sets the entire action of the play in Mary Shelley's consciousness. By doing so she has achieved two things. Firstly, she has turned retrospection and fantasy into theatrical reality which is different from 'everyday reality' by being ideologically charged through

deliberate recontextualisation. In other words, Lochhead's Mary Shelley is not a historical person, but Lochhead's representation of the historical person. Lochhead deconstructs the biographical element for two reasons: to avoid a clichéd representation of Mary Shelley, unless such a representation is deliberately employed by Lochhead herself, and to open a polemic about the issues of gender and women's writing that Lochhead herself struggled against at the time when she was writing the play.

Secondly, by placing the entire action in the main protagonist's consciousness, Lochhead further problematises the question of a writer's authority over her creation. The audience is not faced merely with the insertion of one story into another, namely, Mary's story about writing *Frankenstein* into Lochhead's story about Mary, the author of *Frankenstein*. There is something more complex at work in this play than it might seem at first sight. Lochhead's narrative mirrors Mary's stream of consciousness which involves, on the one hand, Mary's writing in the present about events from six years ago, and, on the other hand, the intrusion of scenes from the novel into both the present and the past events. One is constantly engaged in jumping the time warp between the present and the past of Mary's reality on the one hand, and the imaginary time of the novel on the other, as well as the spatial warp between Mary's location indicated in Lochhead's stage directions, and the location of the novel as indicated in Mary's writing. At the same time, one is repeatedly reminded of yet another layer of reality, that is, of Lochhead's writing a story about Mary and her creation. All of this prevents the audience immersing themselves in the illusion of stage realism. They are constantly distanced from it and invited to reinterpret it. This

dissection results in the dislocation of Mary's subject, or the split subject, if one is to use the term introduced by Jacques Lacan²³ in his psychoanalytic and linguistic study *Écrits*. According to Lacan, language is acquired at the expense of a split in the 'I' subject between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enonce, 'the I who speaks and the I who is represented in the discourse'.²⁴ The attempt to reconcile the two facets of the 'I' subject through the protagonist's reluctant quest for her own story represents a central point of the play and is 'emblematic of the feminist quest to find the lost woman writer'.²⁵ Mary's narration of the events in retrospect, which brings to mind sitting in a moving train looking backwards on things long gone, intensifies the discrepancy between Mary the subject/narrator and Mary the object/narrated. In the early phase of her quest she is unable to remove herself from parental ideologies in order to become a subject/narrator, and this causes the schism between what she is and what she represents herself to be. In this sense, the play may be seen as the gradual shift from the male to the female perspective as Mary slowly regains control of her story.

Varty complains that the juxtaposition of the scenes from the novel in the 1982 script 'impedes the narrative flow (...) while the thematic and metaphoric flow is confused by the delayed introduction of Frankenstein and the monster'.²⁶ Indeed, the mood of the play shifts in act II. While act I is more or less a description of a bizarre summer which the Shelleys spent in Byron's rented villa in Switzerland, where the phantasmagoric is spoken about but never acted upon, act II transfers entirely into the realm of fantasmagoriana, as Mary calls it, with the world of the novel interfering increasingly into the world of the play until all boundaries are finally blurred. This transience is

indicated by Lochhead's sturm-und-drang-like stage directions at the beginning of act I, scene i: (*MARY writing. Thunder and lightning. Door flashes open, she shuts it, etc. Out of the cupboard comes FRANKENSTEIN and the MONSTER strapped to his bed.*),²⁷ and later observed in the blurring of the lines between events from Mary's life (i. e. the birth of a child, William's death, Shelley's death) and events in the novel (i. e. the birth of the monster, the death of Frankenstein's younger brother, the death of Frankenstein). Instead of impeding the narrative flow, the fragmentation that has been caused by the juxtaposition of the scenes from the novel into Mary's narrative helps illustrate the shift from Mary as a construct in the eyes of the two male Romantic poets to her deconstructed state in act II. Rather than having a single narrative flow, there are several simultaneous and radically different narrative flows. While the first involves Lochhead's account of Mary's story, the second follows Mary in act I as being a reluctant author, the one who renounces her creativity as something alien to her, and the third depicts her struggle in act II to regain control of her story and accept it as a part of herself.

BYRON. (...) How about you, Mary? I'm sure you could astonish me. Aren't you a writer too? Mary Godwin?

MARY. No, I don't want -

SHELLEY. Mary writes very well. Oh, you do, Mary. When you've a mind to. That novel you began, that promised -

BYRON. Novel?

MARY. I did not complete it, it was worthless.

SHELLEY. Now, how could one with a parentage like yours write anything worthless?

MARY. I don't want to be a writer. (act II, p. 9)

Later, near the end of act I, when Byron accuses her of living in Shelley's shadow, Mary bitterly renounces her wit by saying that a wit in a woman is '[l]ike sword

without a scabbard it wounds the wearer...’,²⁸ sour, useless and monstrous. In act I, scene vi, Mary tells Percy Shelley that as a daughter of the prominent philosophers Wollstonecraft and Godwin she refuses to pervert her imagination by writing fictional works which are ‘sickly imaginings (...) which do not elevate the spirit or have anything anchoring them to Real Life’,²⁹ and warns Shelley that they should not play with such dangerous elements. This is a definition of a worldview that Mary has patched up from her parents’ and husband’s ideologies and she herself has fallen an unconscious victim of those ideologies. In the course of the play, Byron sets out to reveal their falsity by constant provocations, for example, the ways in which he addresses her are used to expose her delusions. Interestingly, he uses three different names in reference to her - Godwin, Shelley and her own given name, Mary - in his subtle game of stripping the layers of her self-delusion. For example, he calls her Godwin when he wishes to emphasise the effect that her father’s false ideology of ‘free thinking’ has had on her obsessive intellectualism. He refers to her as Mrs. Shelley when mocking her Shelley-tailored blind idealism and adoration of spirituality. He also attacks the hypocrisy with which she, on the one hand, advocates equality and, on the other, still enjoys the benefits bestowed upon her by her class. It is when he echoes her own unspoken and often repudiated thoughts that he calls her by her given name.

Mary’s Shelleyian-Godwinite idealism, expressed in her rejection of the works of fiction as useless and dangerous, and identification of a poet’s role as being ‘(...) a teacher of the intellect and moral nature as well as merely of the senses and the imagination’,³⁰ is met by Byron’s radically different view of the function of the poetry.

BYRON: Let me tell you, poems are not to be made of nebulous ideas, pretty philosophies, or pointless, pointless politics! A poem is a creature who can only live by what he sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches and grabs, Mrs Shelley! (act I, p. 19)

Unlike Shelley's aerial and platonic view of the world and fascination with highly principled but utterly unrealisable causes, Byron's view is of a less hopeful and more cynical worldview. When talking about Shelley's idealism he calls it 'head-in-the-clouds hopefulness' and 'aery platonics', and he mockingly calls Shelley an Ariel, 'a pure spirit moving through the changing air, fashioning liquid verse into new forms for freedom'.³¹ By the same token, he describes himself as a pig in the biblical proverbial, 'as ditchwater dull and tethered to the earth as clodhopper Caliban'.³² Besides being the metaphors for Shelley's and Byron's different attitudes towards poetry and the world that surrounds them, Ariel and Caliban also become the metaphors for a contradiction in Mary's nature between rational (Godwinite, Shelleyian) and irrational (Byronian) principles. In this sense, the characters of Shelley and Byron become representations of Mary's split identity, or rather identities. These identities are still perceived from the male perspective. Mary and other female protagonists in the play are construed on the basis of the Romantic perception of woman as being either idealised (Shelley describes Mary as his soul's sister), or demonised (in a nightmare Shelley sees Mary as the Lamia). The introduction of the monster, as a metaphor for a monstrous female imagination or Female Muse, and the scenes from Mary's novel in act II, indicate the beginning of the deconstruction of the male perspective, as Mary, like indeed her author, struggles to find her own, female perspective and to regain the authorship of her story.

The Romantic model of the feminine as being either ideal or demonic (the virgin-strumpet dichotomy already mentioned with respect to Sue Glover's work) can be further observed in Lochhead's use of the interpolation of excerpts from Romantic poetry. At the beginning of the play Byron describes Mary as 'a slight pale little girl',³³ who is all 'water and air', rather than 'fire and earth'³⁴ like her mother. There is an underlined contradiction in this description of an innocent and naive nineteen-year-old girl that will prove crucial for Lochhead's handling of Mary's character. This slight pale little girl has stories to tell that make Byron spend a sleepless night 'quite unmanned and unnerved'.³⁵ Furthermore, although her poise may remind one of Ariel rather than of Caliban, one should take into account that she eloped with a married man at the age of sixteen and, at nineteen, bore him a child out of wedlock, conduct that even today would be looked down upon in some circles. The play abounds in allusions to the light-dark dichotomy of Mary's soul. When provoking her to enter the writing competition Byron tells Mary that he believes that she has a talent for 'damps and darks' of 'rat-infested dungeons of the human soul'.³⁶ Similarly, he appeals to her 'dark', irrational side, when he demands of her that she descend from Ariel's head-in-the-clouds hopefulness to the earth-bound hopelessness of Clubfooted Caliban.

Here, calibanism represents the demonic side of the Romantic model of the feminine. In act I Mary recites to her companions an excerpt from Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner':

Her lips were red, her looks were
free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life In Death was she,

who thickens man's blood with cold. (act I, scene vi, p. 15)

The image presented here is that of a sexual woman as a demon, a vampyre, with her pale complexion, red lips, and free looks. There is an ambiguity to the meaning of the phrase 'her looks were free' because it can be interpreted as either liberated or loose. The notion that the woman's sexuality is morally unacceptable, and even demonic, is further pursued in the lingering image of 'she who thickens man's blood with cold'.³⁷ The underlining idea in this verse is that of male impotence, which is indicated at various occasions during the play. For example, when Shelley suffers from a nightmarish vision of Mary as the Lamia, and runs out of the room in a hysterical fit, Byron prevents Mary from following him with the words: 'No, Mary, let Claire. You are not the right person. You are the subject of his ... Waking Nightmare.'³⁸ On another occasion, after a sleepless night, Byron says that Mary's story has left him 'unmanned and unnerved'.³⁹

The idea of male impotence is reinforced in the verse 'the Nightmare Life In Death was she'⁴⁰ where it expresses a man's anxiety about a woman's creative ability, about conception as a possible consequence of sexual intercourse. 'The Nightmare Life In Death' can be interpreted as the Little Death, the moment of orgasm which is also the potential moment of a conception. Mary offers an alternative reading of the word 'death' when she compares the Little Death, which the poets talk about and which is associated with orgasm, to 'the Death they talk about below stairs, down there, down among the women',⁴¹ the death of a mother at childbirth. This may explain Mary's antithetical attitudes towards her half-sister and her own motherhood, and her equally antithetical perceptions of woman's position in a patriarchal family unit (her father's

heritage) and of the creative force which can be both life-giving and life-taking (her mother's heritage). These attitudes are reinforced by the actual physical absence of both parents. The image of a mother's dying at childbirth recurs throughout the play and it carries an autobiographical element since it refers directly to her mother's death while giving birth to her.

When Lochhead first started writing *Blood and Ice*, there was a thought at the back of her mind about Mary Shelley's parental heritage, and particularly the theoretical work of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) was an Anglo-Irish feminist, writer and translator who belonged to a circle of political writers and reformers known as the English Jacobins. She advocated the equality of the sexes and equal opportunities in education in her books *Reply to Burke* and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Virginia Woolf made an interesting attempt at tackling the contradictions surrounding the life of this accomplished and in her time highly controversial author in her essay entitled simply 'Mary Wollstonecraft' and originally written for the *Nation and Athenaeum*, 5 October 1929. Woolf's points will be briefly referred to here because they bear significance for the analysis of Lochhead's character of Mary Shelley. Although the play concentrates on the daughter, the mother's shadow is never far behind, and Mary's ideas and actions become clearer when one gains an insight into her parental heritage. Indeed, during an interview,⁴² Lochhead admitted that her initial intention was to write about Mary Wollstonecraft, but in the course of her research she realised that what really interested her were the ways in which the idealisms of Wollstonecraft, and her husband and collaborator Godwin, affected their daughter, Mary Shelley Godwin. Mary Shelley is caught between her

wish to live up to her parents' ideals, and her need to prove her own worth in a way that is independent from the parental heritage that has been thrust upon her. In connection with her passive compliance to her father's ideology, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, this contradiction is emblematic of the schism in Mary's psyche, the schism which is reflected in her negation of herself as a woman and an author. For Mary, parental heritage is an albatross round her neck, an idea played upon in the image of Byron flipping Mary's pendant which contains her mother's picture in act I, scene v. Later in the play Byron mocks the falsity of Godwin's and Percy Shelley's respective idealisms, adopted by Mary, when he accuses her of being Godwin's daughter 'wishing to convince us - and her Papa - that she has her head in the right place!'.⁴³ This places Mary in the position of an object since her beliefs, and she herself, have been moulded by her parental ideology. In other words, rather than being a subject conducting 'a noble experiment', Mary is a subject of an experiment created in her parents' ideological laboratory.

At the time when she first met Shelley, at the age of sixteen, Mary was very much under the influence of her parents' free-thinking ideology. Woolf writes that for Wollstonecraft woman's first quality was independence, 'not grace or charm, but energy and courage and the power to put her will into effect'.⁴⁴ Shelley describes her belief and eagerness to put into practice her mother's ideals.

SHELLEY. ... Back in that graveyard ... you were sixteen ... and I knew that I had found ... everything. Beauty, fire, intellect. And you said yes. Yes, you'd sail with me (...) (act II, p. 30)

Mary thought that in Shelley she had found a soul-mate who shared the belief in 'a new way of life', as envisioned in the concept of the Natural Man, and that in the act of elopement with him she would realise her mother's stipulation of independence. In the early days following their elopement, she still nurtured her beliefs in independence, equality of the sexes and free love, however, these beliefs were based on intellectual premises which had little to do with real life. Shelley emphasises the spiritual aspect of his and Mary's relationship when he says that from the moment they met their souls have been fused as one and 'like a lightning bolt, the electricity arcs between [them] and comes to earth'.⁴⁵ Their relationship is the relationship of two intellects, 'a noble experiment', as Mary calls it, that should have been a realisation in practice of Godwin's ideology based on the belief that 'reason should influence even the love between men and women'.⁴⁶ Godwin was referring here to his relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft, which he considered to be highly spiritual. He went on to accuse marriage of being 'an affair of property, and the worst of all properties',⁴⁷ and to suggest that if two people liked each other they should consummate their affair free of marriage ties. What comes across from Godwin's views is his emphasis on intellect rather than on feeling. Lochhead emphasises this through her recurrent references to galvanism. Shelley mentions it with regard to his childhood games 'with a new-minted machine, a bottle and a bit of wire - applying electric shocks to all the little girls',⁴⁸ implying that any emotion that he and Mary may feel for each other is under scientific scrutiny. Lochhead attributes sexual connotations to the act of Shelley/Frankenstein's creation of the Monster in Mary's story, which strengthens the notion that there is a link between artistic creation and the act of childbirth. Byron warns Mary about the possible consequences of this 'noble experiment', which he refers to as 'the analytical

anatomical dismantling of the human heart' ⁴⁹ and which, in his opinion, is 'hideously unnatural in [its] cold-blooded put-together passion'. ⁵⁰ He ridicules the callous intellectualism with which Mary throws herself into the arms of Shelley's close friend Hogg, and in his experiment with Mary's maid, Elise, he exposes the hypocrisy of Godwin's principle of equality which renders some people, intellectuals, the ruling class, more equal than others, the working class:

MARY. Well, I understand why my father advocated the saving of -

BYRON. *You*, Fenelon.

MARY. Yes. There is the consideration that the common good of all mankind for all time will benefit from My Work. So save me.

BYRON. Ah, but suppose this mere maid were my wife? Or my mother? Yes, or my sister? Certainly I should want to save my beloved sister before some old Philosopher.

MARY. *My* wife, *my* sister, *my* mother! What is so magical about the pronoun *my*. My sister may be a fool... or a harlot... If she be, then what worth is she lent by the fact she is my sister? (act I, p.18)

Byron accuses Mary of class hypocrisy and uses her patronising of Elise as an example. Mary denies that any hypocrisy is at work in her conduct towards her maid. She claims that, being a Fenelon whose work must be for 'the common good of all mankind', ⁵¹ it is her duty to educate and enlighten Elise, and to act with benevolence towards all creatures. Byron exposes her 'good will' and 'benevolence' as just another way of force-feeding freedom to those of a lower social status than herself, and mentions the French Revolution as an example of good will and high principles gone sour.

Mary's use of bombastic terms such as the common good and benefit, and her rejection of the concept of possession, which has its roots in her mother's idea that a relationship should be free and that the 'marriage tie should not bind after the death of love, if love should die', ⁵² cannot hide the fact that her ideology is a man-made ideology which places a white, upper class, educated man in the centre of things. Lochhead recurrently hints at this discrepancy. In act I, scene ii, when we first see Mary in her and Shelley's Swiss villa, she is portrayed as a conventional young woman who cares about social codes and is disconcerted with Shelley's nudity in front of her mother's aging friends. She is even more shocked by her half-sister Claire's illicit affair with Byron and accuses her of behaving like a maidservant. She answers Shelley's question about where the harm is with a warning about the scandal that would arise should Claire get pregnant, while at the same time conveniently ignoring the fact that her own child is illegitimate, since Shelley is still married to another woman. After finding out about her maid Elise's pregnancy, she turns her out of the house and forces her to marry the child's father. When Shelley opposes her decision and expounds Godwin's idea that it is paternity that enslaved women in the first place, '(...) ever since Man found out his spark was essential to the creation of life, Woman has been his slave' ⁵³, she scoffs at his mentioning of an ideal world in which Elise's (and Claire's) illicit child would be born 'in its own legacy of love'. ⁵⁴ Similarly, when Shelley's wife Harriet commits suicide, Mary convinces Shelley that the best course of action would be to legalise their relationship. All of her actions are in direct opposition to her parents' ideologies. However, it is only after the death of her children, and her own near-death experience at childbirth, that she will consciously acknowledge the full falsity of her father's ideology, in the same way that her mother admitted, years ago,

that, having accomplished fame and independence, all she ever longed for was the certainty and safety of a marriage tie:

MARY. (...) Shelley, we are treated like monsters, cut off from all the world. I was sixteen years old, my mother wrote it, my father wrote it, you my lover wrote it! 'Marriage was a sad charade: it ought not to be prolonged for one moment longer than the natural affections did spontaneously dictate.'

I did not know when I ran away with you we would be exiles from all society, the subject of vile and vicious rumour, hounded - (act II, p. 29)

Marriage is a sad charade and ought not be prolonged longer than natural affections spontaneously dictate. However it is only men who benefit from this principle. When a man breaks a social code he is called a libertine and a rogue, his eccentricity is welcomed and admired in fashionable social circles. However, when a woman dares to challenge a social code, she is punished by being ignored, gossiped about and hounded. With regard to this, Boyd hints that the liberation of women from repression might be 'exploited by men to further their own dark ends and female complicity in this can be very dangerous indeed'.⁵⁵ Such a complicity is reflected in Claire Clairmont's wearing of a red velvet ribbon in the fashion influenced by the French Revolution. Although Claire claims that *à la victime* is only a fashion invented to please gentlemen's eyes, Mary perceives it as a characteristic of gender inequality which renders all women as victims. She refers to this inequality when she talks about the possibility of a free woman existing in an unfree society:

MARY. (...) Oh freedom in a man may be all very well,
but...
A Free Woman is a loose woman.
A Free Woman in the society of the Un-free will be...
A monster.

In an unfree society the worst monster will
be a loose woman.
Oh Shelley, don't make me free. (act II, p. 31)

The Mary who speaks these words is a quite different person from the nineteen-year-old girl presented at the beginning of her story. This is Mary exhausted by successive pregnancies and lethargic after years of loneliness and isolation. The gap between herself and Shelley has deepened with her realisation that she cannot follow him in his libertine ways. The different ways in which their genders are constructed have left them 'stranded on their separate ice-floe[s]'.⁵⁶ Her final realisation that as a woman she occupies an inferior position in the social hierarchy makes her reject the monster that she has awakened in herself and created out of herself:

MARY. (...) The ice saved me, I was bleeding my lifeblood
away and my Shelley plunged me in a bath of ice and stopped the
flow.
Further creation would be the death of me.
I do not think I will ever begin me another.
Creation is its own reward.
'Creation may well be the death of me.'
Every woman knows it. (act II, p. 34)

Mary has completed the whole circle, from removal from the realm of the rational, masculine principle, symbolised by Godwin's ideology, to entry into the realm of the irrational, feminine principle, symbolised by her story, and then to seeming rejection of both realms at the end of the play. Her decision to deny herself the ability to create is grounded on the premise that such an ability is self-destructive. Unlike her mother and children, she is a survivor. She has survived both the bleeding that killed her mother and the one that caused her to abort her child. In the words of McDonald and Harvie, she has shed the roles of both a daughter and a mother in order to 'establish herself as

subject'.⁵⁷ McDonald and Harvie offer an interesting interpretation of the blood spilt at Mary's birth by which it is 'thematically and symbolically linked with her own menstrual blood and to the blood that she shed on her miscarriage'.⁵⁸ This notion can be taken a little further in offering an association of blood with ink. In a monologue in act I, scene iv, Mary describes her menstrual blood as 'a thin dark red line running ... scribbling as if a quill was dipped in blood and scribbled'.⁵⁹ Lochhead will later refer to the association of sexual reproduction and artistic creation in her claim that many female authors 'write as if ink were blood'.⁶⁰

It has been shown, earlier in the play, how the Romantic interpretation of the feminine as based on the fixed virgin/strumpet dichotomy, is problematised and unfixed by offering the two opposing representations of Mary which indicate the split in Mary's character. Interestingly, those representations are still offered from the male perspective, namely, by Shelley and Byron. Lochhead goes a step further and develops other characters in the play as the different facets of Mary's personality, splitting the 'I' subject even further and facilitating the perception of Mary as a conglomerate of constantly changing selves and plural identities. Claire is seen as both a manipulative and manipulated sexual force unburdened by Mary's mental anguish and disinterested in Mary's crusading quest for self-cognition. For her, '[t]here is no stronger a bond between a man and a woman than the making of a child';⁶¹ it is stronger even than the social conventions that she has broken by giving birth to Byron's illegitimate daughter, and consorting with her half-sister's husband Shelley. There is an ambiguity about the sibling rivalry between Mary and Claire that Lochhead stresses by means of mirror imaging, the theatrical device that she was going to use again both in *Dracula* where

she juxtaposes Lucy and the Vampire Bride, and in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* in a scene where actresses playing Elizabeth and Mary double as each other's maid. This device serves to stress the similarities and differences between these women, based on their different social and cultural backgrounds. In the mirror scene in act I, scene iv, in which the actresses enact the same dream-like movements of hairbrushing before breaking into a childhood rivalry routine, Mary and Claire are seen as representations of the intellect/body dichotomy, the two sutured parts of the same whole which simultaneously attract and repulse each other. The suturing of intellect and body is indicative of woman's positionality as an unwilling object in the male-dominated world of the Romantic period, unaware of the potential of her freedom and therefore moulded into the role of a victim. Mary refers to this when she confesses that her lack of love for and rejection of Claire is due to Claire's unawareness of her potential power - a deficit which reminds Mary all too painfully of her own blindness:

MARY: (...) But Claire does not understand her own freedom, therefore she does not own it. And so it is All For Love, her own victim! She is my dark mirror. I cannot look on her. (act II, p. 32)

The mind/body dichotomy is symbolised by the red velvet ribbon which Claire wears round her neck in the *à la victime* fashion of the French Revolution, and which is reminiscent of the black ribbon that Lucy wears round her neck in *Dracula* to hide the vampire bite marks. In act II, scene x, Mary sarcastically remarks that *à la victime* is *à la mode* for all time, when referring to the sharp contradiction between Shelley's utopian view of the world, and a woman's starkly opposed reality. Throughout the play Lochhead refers to Mary as a scarlet woman. For instance, Claire calls her a scarlet lady when referring to her illicit relationship with Shelley.

CLAIRE. Do you not think we are somewhat alike? Oui? Yes Mary we do resemble each other after all. Oh not in colouring, no, but in bearing, in -

MARY. How could we, we are not -

CLAIRE. Not in blood, no. But we are closer perhaps than sisters, oui? Haven't we always shared everything?

MARY. Since we were three years old.

CLAIRE. You love to write. And I love to write. You found a passionate poet to be your lover. And I -

MARY. Came with us.

CLAIRE. Mary! Tu n'es pas gentil! What else could I do?

(Pause)

You are such a scarlet lady, Mary. And now I am scarlet too! Oui? We are two very-

MARY. My mother would have been utterly-

CLAIRE. Oh she was scarlet too?

(Pause. Looking into the mirror of MARY) (act I, scene iv, p. 10)

In this dialogue the concept of sisterhood, frequently used by Lochhead in her writing, is disrupted by Mary's stubborn attempt to differentiate between herself and Claire. Later on, when she is dismissed by Mary for getting pregnant by a male servant, Elise will echo Claire's words:

ELISE. (...) Indeed I understand it very well. The Rights of Woman. The marvellous Mary Wollstonecraft was very keen on freedom for the Woman with six hundred a year and a mill-owning husband to support her - and a bevy of maidservants sweeping and starching and giving suck to her squalling infants - not to speak of her rutting husb-

(MARY slaps her hard. ELISE and MARY looking at each other, echoing the CLAIRE/MARY mirror scene in Act I)

Don't you think we are sisters? Are we not somewhat alike? (act II, p. 25)

These two instances show that Lochhead is eager to avoid representing a simplified interpretation of the feminine based on the principle of sisterhood which alleges that all women share the same experiences. McDonald and Harvie suggest correctly that

Lochhead repeatedly depicts Mary and Claire, and Mary and Elise, by means of mimetic representation, as the reflections of each other in the mirror, or as the dolls, only to disrupt that interpretation by interpolating elements that differentiate them. On the one hand, Mary and Claire belong to the same social class and have been brought up together as sisters from early childhood. However, besides the unfortunate fact that they both have lost their children, there is little else that would link them together. Any other similarity that may arise in the course of the play is presented by Mary as Claire's attempt to imitate her, and furthermore, Mary perceives Claire as being a disruptive element in her and Shelley's relationship. Lochhead's juxtaposition of scenes from the novel and Mary's reality leaves it unclear whether Claire's and Shelley's affair has ever really happened or whether it is just a figment of Mary's imagination when, delirious from the shock caused by her children's recent death. Mary's and Claire's differences are even more accentuated by Claire's flirtation with a French accent, a stereotype which emphasises her easy-going and morally loose character.

On the other hand, Elise represents another facet of Mary's identity, namely, her repressed social consciousness. Although Elise and Mary are divided by their very different social and cultural backgrounds, they are linked by their position in relation to their male counterparts in the social hierarchy. Mary alludes to this link when she identifies a woman and a pauper as occupying the position of slavery in the social hierarchy, drawing from it the logical conclusion that being a working-class woman means being a slave's slave.

The link between the three women, and the ever-present shadow of Mary's late mother is further shown in Mary's reference to their moral looseness:

MARY. Scarlet ladies. We all have blood on our hands. (act II, p. 31)

Besides the more conventional interpretation of a scarlet lady as being a morally loose woman, in the above example the scarlet colour could also be linked with blood. The reference to blood on their hands may be interpreted as both the menstrual blood and the blood shed in childbirth. It may also represent the guilt that Mary feels due to the death of her children. All the women who figure in the play, either in person or in other characters' conversations (Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Claire Clairmont and Elise), have broken a social code and/or have had illicit affairs with married men. Both Mary and her mother gave birth to stillborn babies, and Mary's two children and Claire's daughter died young. In this sense, another interpretation of the scarlet/blood could be that of aborted creative ability.

Besides the blood, Lochhead uses a number of other images to represent female sexuality. Among these are the moon, the sea, and the blood. She also uses the ice imagery in order to depict the rejection of female sexuality as a possible solution to mind/body dichotomy, and a way of regaining control of the 'I' subject of Mary's, and ultimately Lochhead's, story.

In the beginning of her narrative, Mary calls the moon her element:

MARY: (...) My element. I swim in it and I do not drown. I dream in it. (act I, scene i, p. 5)

The moon represents nature's cycle, as well as the menstrual cycle of a woman's body. The moon is also the night's element, the time of dreams and nightmares, when the monstrous female imagination is unleashed. Another image used by Lochhead is the sea, which represents a woman's sexuality in being both life-giving and life-taking. Mary's fear of the sea may therefore be interpreted as her fear of this uncontrollable creative force that may ultimately destroy her. In contrast with blood, there is the image of ice which represents a dispassionate, rational aspect. In this sense, the icing of the sea may be seen either as a suspension of the creative force, or, in the case of Mary's ice bath, as an act of self-preservation. The title of the play, therefore, expresses the fundamental dichotomy in Mary's endeavour to reconcile the intellectual/rational and sexual/irrational aspects of the 'I' subject of her story.

The male characters in the play are representations of the male aspects of Mary, or, if we push further Lochhead's argument about the genderisation of literature, they might be interpreted both as the representations of the Male Muse which represses Mary's creative ability and those male aspects of her personality which prevent her from regaining control of her story. In this sense, the characters of Shelley and Byron can be seen as the antipodal elements of a multiple identity position. While Shelley represents her platonic idealism and fascination with scientific discourse, Byron stands for her monstrous imagination. The representation of all the characters as different facets of Mary's identities becomes even more clear when one takes into consideration the doubling of roles caused by the constant juxtaposition between Mary's reality and

her fiction. Thus, Shelley doubles as Victor Frankenstein, Byron is the Monster and in one instance the Accuser, Claire is Elizabeth Frankenstein, and Elise becomes Frankenstein's maid Justine and the female monster. In act II the characters float between their two respective roles and constantly shift, deconstruct and reassemble the pieces of Mary's identities until all the lines between Lochhead's account of Mary's life and Mary's novel are blurred. Interestingly, Mary remains herself throughout the play, and it is not until the end that she identifies herself with Captain Robert Walton. The crossing of Walton's ship to the Pole, from the following passage, is interpreted as Mary's crossing from the rational realm of her father's, signifying the masculine principle, into the imaginary land of her childhood dreams, signifying the feminine principle. In this respect the passage can be read as Mary's (and Lochhead's) rejection of the repressive masculine principle:

FRANKENSTEIN. (*Laughing*) Then we are brothers!

MARY. No!

FRANKENSTEIN. Oh yes, I think we are somewhat alike!

MARY. No. You are dying but I see a crazy hope in your eyes that is gone from mine. It has gone dead in me. My mariners have made me promise that if we are ever released from this hell - unlikely! The ice has such a grip on us. But if a miracle happened and a free passage were to open, I have promised to turn south, head for more moderate regions, I cannot go on without the consensus of my fellow travellers, their Common Will.

FRANKENSTEIN. You must persuade them. Lead them, Walton. Tell them: 'Be men or more than men. You cannot turn back now when you have come this far. The ice cannot stop you if your hot hearts say it shall not!'

MARY. I have promised to return to England. Give up all I once hoped for. Frankenstein why have you come here to this place? Tell me.

FRANKENSTEIN. To seek one who fled from me.

MARY. We saw him. In the dim distance we saw the shadow of him. He is dead. I am certain he must have perished, there I cannot go on without the consensus of my fellow travellers, their Common Will.

(...)

The strangest figure, like a man -

FRANKENSTEIN. But not a man. Kill it!

MARY. I could not kill any living creature. I cannot take up your pursuit, I cannot kill - it is dead already. (act II, p. 33)

Frankenstein's words remind one of Shelley's incurable platonic idealism. However, there are two elements in this passage that are of interest. The first element is Lochhead's use of the plural in 'we saw him'. 'We' signifies Walton's crew who are the reflection of Mary's plural identities. When she refers to the Common Will of Walton's fellow travellers, she is actually referring to the possibility of reconciling the split in the 'I' subject that was previously discussed. She describes the monster as a strange creature, almost like a man. This is a clear reference to the female imagination which is 'almost' like the male imagination, but not quite, as Frankenstein fiercely propounds, because *it* is not a man and needs to be destroyed. Female imagination, and indeed creativity, are represented as different, deviant and monstrous. By the same token, *it* may signify mankind's hatred of womankind as alien, and potentially threatening. Frankenstein goes on to describe the Monster as cunning and being able to lie like a man. Mary's reply is rather reassuring; the monstrous is not so monstrous after all, it is dead already - harmless.

At the end of the play we find Mary struggling with her nightmare in which the central position is occupied by the phallic image of the Monster's shadow. Her decision to repress her creative ability is expressed in the claim 'I do not think I will ever begin me another'.⁶² Here she is referring to an act of creation which signifies both biological reproduction and artistic creation. In the first instance, biological reproduction has proved destructive, her children are dead and she has almost died in childbirth. In the

second instance, her writing has proved self-destructive, it has made her doubt idealistic beliefs with which she has been brought up. In this sense, Lochhead's use of the ice imagery becomes interesting, she imposes the new meanings on the imagery of ice, whose traditional meaning is an ice maiden, a woman who either rejects or is devoid of sexuality. For Lochhead, the image becomes a signifier of masculine, rational side of one's nature. In her concluding inquiry, 'Will ice save me?', ⁶³ the ice signifies the rejection of female biological and artistic creativity as potentially self-destructive. It also signifies her embrace of mind/body dichotomy, and the realisation that in order to further create, she will have to find a way of accepting her *otherness* and counterbalancing the two sides of her nature. As a woman she has become fully aware of the risks of a childbirth, as an author she needs to open up her mind and let in her demons if she is ever to create again.

3.4. *Dracula (1985)*

On a calm warm Midsummer morning sisters Lucy and Mina Westerman expect the visit by Mina's fiance, a young lawyer Jonathan Harker. At the same time, Dr Seward, a psychiatrist at a nearby clinic, is treating Renfield, a disturbed lawyer with a fascination for blood and eternal life. Seward and Jonathan, old school friends, meet by chance and discuss Jonathan's forthcoming marriage with Mina, a sensible young woman who has inherited a considerable wealth after her parents' premature death. Jonathan suggests to Seward to come with him and meets his fiance. Seward agrees, unwillingly at first, but is thrilled when he meets Lucy. Soon he proposes to her. Seward's proposal coincides with Jonathan's informing Mina that they have to postpone their marriage plans, because he is to set off for Transylvania at once, where he is to meet the firm's newest client, Count Dracula. Once in Dracula's castle, Jonathan realises that darker forces are at work, and that he has become the Count's prisoner. He suffers from hallucinations in which he is haunted by Dracula's vampiric brides, led by the female vampire in Lucy's image. He manages to escape and calls for Mina, who leaves England to join him. They are married abroad. In the meanwhile, Dracula arrives on England's shores and begins to haunt

Lucy and her maid Florrie. Seward, aware of Lucy's deteriorating health, but ignorant of the cause of the sudden malady, calls for his former mentor, Professor Van Helsing. Van Helsing arrives, however, it is too late to save Lucy, who dies before Mina and Jonathan return to England. Mina blames herself, while Jonathan and Van Helsing try to convince Seward that dark forces are at large. Finally, Seward is convinced and the three men go through the ritual killing of Lucy, who is now herself a newly fledged vampire. While they are busied with Lucy's execution, Dracula comes to Seward's clinic, kills Renfield and seduces Mina who has been hiding there. He is almost caught by the men upon their return from the cemetery, but manages to escape and is heading back to Transylvania. The men, led by Van Helsing, decide to go after him, taking with them Mina who is in the process of becoming a vampire and is their only link with Dracula. The last scene is set in winter, in front of Dracula's castle where the men succeed in killing Dracula and saving Mina from the curse.

The reason for concentrating on the issue of female sexuality in discussing Lochhead's writing is that this issue explicitly shows how gender and linguistic inequalities are artificially constructed by the cultural imperatives of patriarchal society. It has already been proposed that the underlying idea in *Blood and Ice* is that of the schism in Mary being based on the contradiction between Mary's perception of herself as a woman and as an author, and the popular perception of the way in which she is perceived in men's eyes. To emphasise this, Lochhead plays with the Romantic notion of the eternal feminine; that is, the model of the feminine as seen by, for example, the Romantic poets is that of a virtuous woman, and any trace of sexual innuendo is hidden behind the idealisation of love's spiritual side. Sexuality is seen as alien to woman's nature, or, rather, to behaviour that the Romantic poets have constructed as inherent in woman's nature. Any behaviour which differs from the norm is explained as a hex that has been laid upon a woman by an evil force. In this way, as McDonald and Harvie argue in their article 'New Twists to Old Stories: Feminism and Lochhead's Drama' (1993), in the Romantic vampire tradition female sexuality is inextricably linked to evil,

'unnatural' and self-destructive forces'.⁶⁴ By the same token, in *Dracula*,⁶⁵ Lochhead extends this notion to the Victorian period as the background against which she investigates the traditional mythology of vampirism, where the vampire is represented as an evil force who preys upon his innocent victims. The emphasis is on the word 'innocent', for the victims are always young virgins, who are attacked in their sleep (another symbol of innocence). The name Drakul (or Dracula) is also emblematic, in that in the Wallachian language it means Devil. In his book *Vampyres: From Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (1991), Christopher Frayling identifies four archetypal vampires in nineteenth-century fiction: the Satanic Lord (or Byronic Hero), the Femme Fatale, the Unseen Force (the Familiar) and the Folkloric Vampire. McDonald and Harvie propose that the Romantic and Victorian traditions mostly use the first stereotype, although some authors, like Le Fanu, occasionally employ the second stereotype as well. The fiend is seen as a Byronic hero, a seducer (a big bad wolf or the biblical snake), while the victim is always a young woman of good breeding and high moral principles who is simultaneously attracted to and repelled by her attacker. Lochhead toys with this stereotype in *Blood and Ice*. For example, Byron constantly provokes Mary by boasting about his sexual conquests, which perpetuates his self-imposed image as the clubfooted Caliban, Devil and the Monster. Mary continuously resists his attacks with disgust and accuses him of having 'no soul'.⁶⁶ However, once he discontinues his advances she tells him that his real sin is that he 'give[s] up... too easily'.⁶⁷ Her ambiguous feeling towards Byron is further implied in the adjacent stage direction, (*Meaning WITH HER. (...)*).⁶⁸ In his novel *Dracula*, Bram Stoker perpetuates the Romantic model which sees the evil force as an invariably masculine force preying upon the chastity of young women, and 'awakening in them desires that

were best left dormant' ⁶⁹. Although highly romanticised, the portrayal of the vampire in Stoker's story is still very much in accordance with the traditional myth of Dracula as a male force, which sees its female victims as objects, and ensures the centrality of a man's position in the society. Lochhead uses Stoker's novel as a spring-board in her intention to deconstruct and readdress the Romantic model of the feminine and of female sexuality. Far from showing women as being powerless victims of an evil masculine force, Lochhead turns the tables in order to show a man's fear of the unknown monstrous side of a woman's being. This monstrous side of a woman's being and the emotional and physical impotence that it can cause in men is referred to in Dr Goldman's speech about a male and a female animus in act I, scene ii.

DR GOLDMAN. One may hypothesize, Silberman says, that the animus in its negative, demonic phase lures women away from all human relationships and especially from all contacts with real men... (...) Correspondingly the malign or 'shadow' anima in a man involves him in those neurotic pseudo-intellectual dialogues that inhibit him from getting into direct touch with life so that, starved of spontaneity and outgoing feeling, he cannot live it ... (act I, scene ii, p. 76)

The negative, demonic phase of the animus which results in the change in a woman's mood and her disinterest in sexual contact refers to periods, of whose existence a man is painfully aware but never fully able to acknowledge. In their book *The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman* (1978) Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrave call this phase 'her dark monthly place'. ⁷⁰ Certain intriguing propositions put forward by Shuttle and Redgrave in their book, can be applied to the analysis of the character of Dracula and the blood and moon imagery in Lochhead's play. On the whole, Lochhead's treatment of the myth shifts from Stoker's use of a satanic/byronic

archetype, which places the male character in the dominant position, to Le Fanu's concept of the *Femme Fatale*, as embodied in his short story *Carmilla*, which gives the female character the central position in the story. Since traditional myth and the mimetic representation of the feminine have proved to have the effect of marginalising women in nineteenth-century fiction, e.g. in *Blood and Ice*, Lochhead seeks to deconstruct and reinterpret them so as to place a woman in the centre of her story. Her version of *Dracula* focuses on the female characters, Mina and Lucy Westerman, and follows their development from representations of the anaemic Romantic stereotype of the feminine to spiritually and sensually liberated women.

The theories linked with the myth are many and diverse. For example, in his book Christopher Frayling mentions a few, such as Freud's theory that vampirism is a representation of our civilisation and its discontents, Jung's theory of suppressed memories in the collective unconscious, and Klein's theory about breast-feeding and the projection onto others of the need to bite. Also, Nina Auerbach offers an analysis of Stoker's *Dracula* in terms of 'a fin de siècle myth of newly-empowered womanhood'.⁷¹ Of course, Stoker's novel is nothing of the sort; his interpretation of the myth focuses on its male protagonists while commodifying the female protagonists. However, McDonald and Harvie's suggestion is persuasive that once Auerbach's theory is applied to Lochhead's text, it can provide a useful starting point for the exploration of Lochhead's reconfiguration of the Romantic myth.

It is possible to show, on the basis of examples from the play, how Lochhead deconstructs the Romantic models of, on the one hand, the myth of Dracula, and, on

the other, the traditional concept of the eternal feminine. This can be considered with reference to the two techniques by which these models are deconstructed; namely, remodelling the story by focusing on the female characters, and the role-doubling, both techniques she had already used in her earlier play *Blood and Ice*. Furthermore, Lochhead's usage of imagery and language (both the dialogue and the stage directions) shows that her representation of the characters in the play is never purely naturalistic, she re-examines mimetic representation (in Plato's sense) in order to reflect the gender and class hierarchy in her plays, and establish the individuals' positions and roles within the system of patriarchy.

Lochhead manages to shift the centrality of her story from the byronic/satanic archetype to the Femme Fatale archetype, as described by Frayling. She suspends the introduction of Dracula's character until later in act I (scene vii), and focuses on the two female protagonists, Mina and Lucy Westerman, instead. The shift is gradual, for at the beginning of the play Lochhead offers a representation of the women from the male perspective, as an amorphous mass, the sisterhood, rather than as individualised entities. This analysis will show how language, and particularly the puns on food and eating, has been used from male perspective to perpetuate the representation of the women as an amorphous mass, and the ways in which Lochhead exposes the falsity of such representation by unfixing and subverting the meanings of those puns. It is proposed that the subsequent result of such a subversion is switching of the roles in order to shift the feminine principle from the marginal into the central position in herstory.

In their article 'New Twists to Old Stories' Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie problematise the concept of sisterhood when they draw our attention to certain problems that arise from the mimetic representation of the female characters in Lochhead's plays. The issue of sisterhood has already been examined in Lochhead's earlier play *Blood and Ice*, where she explores two very different relationships - the relationship between the two sisters in blood, Mary Shelley and Claire, and the relationship between Mary and her maid Elise, the symbolical sister. McDonald and Harvie propose that the notion of sisterhood, which is based on the false idea that simply because women share the same sex they necessarily share the same experiences, is destabilised in *Blood and Ice* by the author's intrusion into its mimetic representation. Indeed, the two theorists claim that the destabilisation of mimesis may compromise:

a notion of women's experience as universal, a notion of sisterhood which transcends cultural and material conditions. Women may share the physical characteristics of our sex - we may look 'the same' - but we may not share the same experiences - our genders may be variously socially constructed and inscribed.⁷²

In *Dracula*, Lochhead remodels the original story by turning the two friends, Mina Murray and Lucy Westenra, into the sisters Mina and Lucy Westerman. Furthermore, very much like in *Blood and Ice*, the character of the maid will figure strongly as a part of a symbolic trio. Crawford and Varty suggest that in Lochhead's plays 'mistresses and maids are thematically and structurally intertwined'.⁷³ This holds true of all three plays that are under scrutiny in this chapter. Florrie resembles Elise from *Blood and Ice* in more ways than one. Like Elise, she has been force-fed ideas about

equality by Mina, and her presence indicates the underlying hypocrisy with which the upper class treat those who are of a lower social status:

MINA. Don't you think we can all work together, be - what's the cliché - one big happy family?

FLORRIE. Yes, miss.

MINA. Call me Mina! Florrie, we want but one year to a brand new century, times are changing, we'll have no more mistress and servants, I don't believe in them.

FLORRIE. No, miss. (*Pause.*) You will still pay my wages?

MINA. Course we will, silly goose (...) (act I, scene viii, p. 96)

Florrie is uncomfortable with Mina's quasi-liberal ideas, she feels that they are false. Their conversation is interrupted by Lucy whose complaining about her suitors causes a rift between her and Mina. Trying to discontinue their argument, Mina turns on Florrie and completely changes her tone and attitude towards her. While still retaining the rapport talk mode (co-operative and supportive) while addressing her sister, she simultaneously switches to the dominant mode (competitive and assertive) when addressing Florrie. The mistress-servant relationship is re-established:

MINA. Lucy, I'm sorry, I'm very tense, I'm... not quite myself... I'm... going for a walk, I'm... going past the post office. I'll stop to see if there's any mail. Florrie! Florrie, look at the mess in there. Things everywhere! Go tidy it up!

FLORRIE. (*Beginning to go, sharp*) Yes, *Mina*.

MINA. (*Exiting, calling as she does*) Change the flowers in the drawing room! Straighten those antimacassars in the parlour! (act I, scene viii, p. 79)

By presenting the friction in the relationships of the three female characters Lochhead reinforces the idea that they are very different individuals in their own right, and not merely reflections of each other, as seen through the men's eyes.

The two sisters, Mina and Lucy, are represented as opposites. For example, Jonathan, Mina's fiancé, describes them to Count Dracula as 'chalk and cheese'.⁷⁴ Having in mind that chalk and cheese is a common saying in English speaking world, this analysis will attempt to offer a slightly different interpretation in view of the play. Chalk and cheese both represent a pale complexion, and in this sense they can be taken as a linking device between the two young women. Although they suggest similar visual images, they are never the same, either in colour or in texture. The olfactory aspect of the images that Jonathan chooses in his description of the two sisters is particularly interesting and can be used as a distinguishing device. Chalk is used to communicate with or to relate knowledge to somebody. In this way the functional, cerebral element is emphasised. Similarly, Lochhead depicts Mina as a well-mannered, conventional and scrupulous young woman who represses her sensuous side. She cares about what other people say and tries to live up to her deceased parents' wishes in being a good mother-figure to her younger sister. This reminds us of Mary Shelley's attempt, in *Blood and Ice*, to live up to parental ideology. Cheese, in turn, gives pleasure through taste; its sole function is to satisfy hunger. In the same way, Lucy is seen exclusively through her budding sexuality. She is the beauty from Lochhead's poem 'Rapunztiltskin', who becomes a willing 'victim' of Dracula. Lochhead sexualises words linked with food and eating, and the food imagery is used throughout the play to refer to the characters' sexual appetites.

In *Blood and Ice*, Lochhead talks about the willingness of the female characters to be moulded according to male expectations. Mary strives to meet Shelley's and Godwin's ideologies. She tries to 'make herself into a woman who could live with [Shelley]' ⁷⁵ and fails. In the opening scene of *Dracula*, Lucy is seen in the garden dressed only 'in her underwear, swinging with her armful of frou-frou petticoats, mirror in her hand'. ⁷⁶ Mina joins her to help her dress, and what we see before us is a young girl being dressed like a doll for the purpose of pleasing a man's eye. Mina asks her to hurry up because Jonathan will arrive any minute, but Lucy takes her time, attending to the minutest details. She begs her sister to lace up her corset tighter, and when Mina voices her concern about hurting her, Lucy dismisses the possibility as irrelevant:

LUCY. No, you won't. I want it tighter. I want to feel it nip me in. The day they put me in stays and made me wear my hair up I swore blind if I was to be pinched and skewered then I was to have the thinniest thinniest waist and the highest highest hair. I wasn't going to suffer for nothing and not be noticed. (act I, scene i, p. 73)

Although 'they' remain unnamed, it is obvious that Lucy is referring to the fashion imperatives set to please men to the detriment of women's health. Judging from the appearance of the surviving costumes of the period, it was quite impossible for the women, when pinched and skewered and nipped, to sit or eat normally. For example, in Sue Glover's *Bondagers*, Tottie loosens the laces on Ellen's corset so that she can sit in a more relaxed manner. In this way even the clothes become a means of repression; they control women's bodies in the same way that patriarchal ideology controls their minds. The women are represented as objects to be looked at and

carried in men's pockets. Jonathan, for instance, shows Dracula the photograph of Mina, Lucy and Florrie that he carries with him in his pocket. Such a commodification of the women in the play is strengthened by Lochhead's use of mirror imagery in which they are seen as the dolls, as in the previously cited example from act I, as well as by the food imagery.

When Mina first enters the stage, in the opening scene, she is described in Lochhead's stage directions as '(... *MINA WESTERMAN, big sister. Proper English rose, a peach, eating one*)', ⁷⁷ and in Lucy's own words as 'good enough to eat'. ⁷⁸ Later in the play when Arthur Seward teases Jonathan that he is marrying trade, Jonathan defends his choice by describing his fiancé as 'the loveliest girl who ever lived and I should marry her if she hadn't two brass farthings to rub together' ⁷⁹ and as 'beautiful. And brave. And clever.' ⁸⁰ When pushed by Seward, he admits unwillingly that Mina is also 'sweet', ⁸¹ the attribute that he has been trying to avoid in his description of her. This is because, to him, it seems improper to use for her a name which might have olfactory, and therefore sexual, connotations. Mina is shown, in the men's eyes, as a representation of the Victorian ideal of a proper English rose, a wealthy, well-mannered, conventional young virgin, the kind of girl one considers with regard to matrimony, and not with regard to carnal pleasure. Matrimony is seen as a necessary social function, as an inevitability inscribed against the background of the cultural imperatives. However, as in *Blood and Ice*, it is also seen as a confining force for both men and women. In act I, scene x, Lochhead refers to this when she compares the images of a wedding-dress and a strait-jacket:

MINA.

Please please please.

(And a MAID and FLORRIE carry on MINA's half-finished wedding dress as simultaneously two NURSES and DRINKWATER carry bindings and strait-jacket to RENFIELD.)

Florrie, don't make me.

RENFIELD: Bastard. Bastards try tie a man up he only sing a sweet song out loud, clear and pure in their fat faces.

(But MINA gets tape-measured and poked and pinned and, sure enough, RENFIELD gets strait-jacketed.) (act I, scene x, p. 102)

Both the men's and the women's sexualities have been shaped and controlled to suit the cultural imperatives of the dominant ideology. Lochhead points out that this dominant ideology is patriarchal and male-dominated. The men in the play are given the choice between being Ariels and Calibans, whereas a woman is never given that choice. She is judged by the men according to her position and function within the society. For instance, while Mina is idealised as suitable matrimonial material, Jonathan's secretary, Miss Bell, being below his status, is treated as a commodity that can be gazed at - she is referred to as 'A peach. A poppet. Actually she is quite quite delicious...'.⁸² When teased by Seward, Jonathan mockingly paraphrases the biblical imperative 'Yield not to temptation...'.⁸³ to indicate that the sexual innuendoes are acceptable and even welcome in the men's conversation.

Lochhead shows the difference in which women are seen from a male vs. female perspective through distinguishing between Jonathan's and Lucy's description of Mina's character. While Jonathan is careful not to use any sexually charged words when he refers to his fiancé, both the stage directions and Lucy describe her as 'a peach'. Jonathan's attitude towards Mina is indicative of the Romantic idea, perpetuated in Victorian literature, that women, unlike men, are not sexual beings. Any expression of female desire is seen by the men as transgressive. For example,

when Mina grasps at Dracula's cloak in an ambiguous gesture - which may mean both her desire for him and her wish to detain him - Jonathan accuses her of lusting after Dracula and turns away from her. Although he himself does not feel any guilt for giving in to his sexual fantasies about her sister during his detainment in Dracula's castle, he resents the fact that Mina can feel desire for someone else, or rather that she can feel desire at all.

Another example of Lochhead's use of food imagery to represent commodification of women is the lunch scene in act I, scene v.

FLORRIE. Leg or breast, Mr Jonathan?
 JONATHAN. Pardon?
 FLORRIE. The chicken, sir. Leg or breast?
 JONATHAN. Breast. No. Leg. Breast... I think... emm...
 could I have a little piece of each, please, Florrie?
 FLORRIE. Certainly, Mr Jonathan sir. (act I, scene v, p.
 84)

Lochhead plays with the notion of gorging on a woman's flesh in order to stress the fact that women are perceived as objects in the men's eyes. Jonathan's indecision is a representation of the double standard which is at work. This point is further strengthened in Florrie's answer which is at the same time flirtatious and servile, showing her willingness to be shaped by male cultural imperatives. The food in this example is used as a metaphor for male sexual appetites and in this sense it has positive connotations. However, having in mind the earlier point that any expression of a female sexuality is perceived as unnatural and negative, we can perceive that the same imagery will adopt negative connotations when associated with female characters. From the woman's perspective food is something that has to be taken in moderation, in

the same sense that sex must be always linked with the duty to please a man. Mina, when served, takes only a small portion of food, which represents the image of a thin woman, based on the dominant cultural imperatives. A woman who is androgynous and asexual, strapped up in corsets, represents male control over her appearance, behaviour and emotions. This image is further reflected in Lucy's refusal to touch any food. Recent studies of gender in literature ⁸⁴ have suggested that it is possible to interpret Lochhead's portrayal of Lucy as a prepubertal asexual youth who suffers from anorexia. This image is corroborated by Lochhead's description of Lucy in her poem 'Lucy's Diary' ⁸⁵ where Lucy is seen looking at herself in a 'big, big oval mirror' ⁸⁶ in her room and deciding that she will confine her gross flesh 'in the whalebone of [her] own hunger' ⁸⁷ and that 'all term [she] will not bleed'. ⁸⁸ In the opening scene of *Dracula* Lucy admits her willingness to endure any discomfort so as to have 'the thinniest thinnest waist', ⁸⁹ and in act I, scene v, she refers to herself as 'crazy Lucy, mad sleepwalking skinny Lucy with her migraines and her over-vivid imagination'. ⁹⁰ McDonald and Harvie indicate that the above mentioned are the symptoms of amenorrhea, usually linked in medical circles with anorexia. Before the change, the other protagonists in the play treat Lucy as an immature, asexual child, in the same way that they perceive her as a threat after the change. Mina constantly mothers her, and Jonathan refers to her in his conversation with Seward as 'little sister (...) [s]weet kid really (...) terribly thin and somewhat... feverish in her behaviour'. ⁹¹ In the men's eyes Lucy is presented as doll-like, fragile, prone to 'girlish hysteria' ⁹² and 'attention-seeking behaviour' ⁹³ which she will soon grow out of with the help of mental and physical exercise. This is a form of control of a woman's sexuality by patriarchal ideology. Lucy's sexually titillating and explicit behaviour is initially ignored as

childish, and later, when she becomes a victim of her 'vampiric' sexual drives, it is accepted as symptomatic of her illness. In an attempt to remove the illness, Seward shaves off Lucy's hair. The shaving of the hair is also a symbolic act of defeminisation, of stripping off of her femininity. A woman with a shaved head is a desexualised woman, a woman-child.

LUCY. Daddy always loved it long.
 FLORRIE. For health's sake, Miss Lucy. Honest, Arthur thought
 he had to do it, he had to.
 LUCY. Bleed the cold and shave a fever...
 FLORRIE. What an odd girl you are, Miss Lucy.
 LUCY. Said he loved it long and loose and me looking like a
 little schoolgirl.
 FLORRIE. Who did?
 LUCY. Daddy... Arthur! ... Someone...? I forget... (*Pause*)
 Dead and coiled in a box.
 FLORRIE. Who?
 LUCY. Loved me like a schoolgirl... Wonder if he'll love me
 like a little boy... My big fat chopped-off braid in a cigar box, glossy
 as... Quincey Morris's chestnut gelding... (...) Magnificent animal...
 I used to give him sugar with my hand out flat. I wanted to but I
 was afraid to ride. (*Pause. Blurt*) Florrie, go get it, don't want that
 he should have it, cut off bits of me, it's mine. Mine. Fetch it!
 Arthur's desktop... I want to fling it in the fire and see it shrivel. (act
 II, scene ii, p. 114)

Lucy uses the images of a schoolgirl and a little boy in her description of herself. These images reflect the representation of the feminine in the men's eyes as either virginal and innocent or androgynous, and in both cases desexualised. Lucy also expresses her fear of her own sexuality, metaphorised in the citation in the image of a chestnut gelding. When she says that she used to give the gelding 'sugar with [her] hand out flat'⁹⁴ she is referring to her growing fascination with the changes in her body, for the palm of the hand is here associated with the female genitalia. However, she 'was afraid to ride'⁹⁵ although she wanted to, referring thus to her inability to free

herself from the inhibitions that have been imposed on her by the patriarchal society, as symbolised in her father and her fiancé Seward. In Lucy's mind, her father and her fiancé have become the same person, an epitome of a father figure. She compares Seward with her father, ' (...) [a]nd he dragged himself up by his own bootstraps, just like Papa!'⁹⁶ When explaining why she is marrying Seward, Lucy refers to his 'fairness', reliability and most remarkable mind. There is an underlying ambiguity in the word 'fair' since it may mean both nice and just, but hardly sexually attractive. The commodification of women by men is further alluded to in Lucy's request to retrieve her chopped off hair. The hair is kept in Seward's desktop, like a trophy. It symbolises the representation of Lucy as an object in Seward's gaze, in the same way as does the portrait of the three young women that Jonathan keeps in his breast pocket. Lucy's wish to have her hair back and burn it represents her attempt to seize control of her own sexuality from the patriarchal ideology that represses it.

Lochhead shows that this domination of the male characters over the female characters in the play is a false domination. It has already been suggested in this chapter that the male protagonists categorise the women in the play according to their social status and sexual appeal by using words charged with rich olfactory and/or visual attributes such as 'peach', 'sweet', 'beautiful', 'charming', etc. Such an attitude can be interpreted as the men's empowered position over the women, since the women are seen, in the beginning of the play, as objects that are shaped by male cultural imperatives. This is in accordance with feminist theories which suggest that language itself is man-made, and therefore represses any possibility of women expressing themselves through it. In *Dracula*, however, Lochhead takes the masculine principle out of the language.

During his business visit to Transylvania, Jonathan is asked by Dracula to stay a month and help him practise conversation:

JONATHAN. A month! But the business we have to do... while complicated... certainly cannot take more than a few days to complete.
 DRACULA. But, my friend, I want you for... conversation.
 JONATHAN. Conversation?
 DRACULA. Your wonderful English language. It is a living thing, yes? I do not possess it.
 JONATHAN. Count, your command is admirable.
 DRACULA. Dry. Library dust on every syllable. I know the grammar and the words, but I do not know how to speak them.
 JONATHAN. Your English is excellent.
 DRACULA. Through my books, my friends whom I love, I have travelled all over your great country without leaving my own armchair. I am pressed by the throng of your London crowds in their brown fog. I flow with them over London Bridge, to the heart of the city. The rush of humanity, its life, its change, its death - all that makes it what it is. Books are good. But I lack the living tongue.
 JONATHAN. I am no philologist -
 DRACULA. I would not have you so. I want you because you are young. And ordinary. Yes. A splendid specimen of the upright young man. (*Pause.*) A good slanging! The lifeblood of the language... So, when I drink in your every word, digest it, then I shall put on my straw hat and come out from the garden of my Carfax, a real English man. (act I, scene vii, p. 94)

The dialogue takes up a different meaning if Auerbach's approach is adopted. As it has already been mentioned, Auerbach has offered another reading of the vampiric myth which is a binary opposite to the Romantic and Victorian models. From the victimiser of innocent young virgins, Dracula is transformed into a force of liberation from psychological, emotional, sexual and linguistic repression by the dominant (male) cultural imperatives. Lochhead's Dracula is not a byronic figure; indeed, it is not a figure at all. Stan Gooch best illustrates Lochhead's use of Dracula's character in his work *Total Man*, where he ponders whether it is possible that vampires have no

reflection 'because they are that reflection'.⁹⁷ Similarly, Shuttle and Redgrave suggest that Dracula is the reflection of ourselves and our carnal desires. Indeed, since the nineteenth century, vampirism has often been related to some manifestation of eroticism. Frayling refers to it as 'sex from the neck upwards',⁹⁸ while Ornella Volta, in her study of the relationship between vampirism and sexuality entitled *Il Vampiro* (1962) states that a vampire is 'an erotic creation... blood and death, eroticism and fear, are the main elements in the universe of the vampire... The vampire can violate all taboos and achieve what is most forbidden'.⁹⁹ Similarly, Shuttle and Redgrave depict Dracula as a liberator of women from sexual repression. In Chapter VII of *The Wise Wound*, entitled 'The Mirror of Dracula', they describe the transformation that Lucy and Mina go through following their encounter with Dracula:

Before they were bitten, they were chlorotic weak creatures with vapours, dressed in stiff constricting corseted garments, who spoke in faint and genteel voices expressing deep frustration. After their blood had been shed from the vampire, though (and it is always from the *neck*; as we say neck or cervix of the womb), and they had suffered their first death into their new lives as vampires - why, what creatures they became. The corsets were replaced by practical white unhampering shrouds, very free and easy, sometimes a little blood-stained to show the red on the white, with the black hair and the bright glances tossing above very low cut shrouds displaying a great deal of rosy bosom. Their eyes shone, their gait was swift and vigorous, they spoke energy with every glance and their smiles, full of bright teeth with handsome canines, like neat panthers, were flashing and free, like Keats' La Belle Dame Sans Merci¹⁰⁰.

Lochhead's Dracula is more than a liberator of the repressed feminine: he, or rather it, is a representation of the female protagonists' growing consciousness of their own intellectual, emotional, sexual and linguistic power, a willing guest who can only enter

their lives and imagination if invited. It is not a coincidence that Dracula's arrival in England coincides with Lucy's first period:

FLORRIE. Last night though! Such a storm! What stories people do tell! Down at the dairy this mornin' everybody was all agog about that ship. Nonsense and superstition. Nobbut one dead man lashed to the wheel! Hands stiff round a crucifix, its chain wound so tight said it were cut clean through to white wrist bone. And in his pocket writin'. Writin' 'bout how ship was haunted. One by one sailors jess... overboard or eaten. Must've gone mad on long voyage with lack of vitals! But oh... oh, what a storm, eh? Mother and father of a tempest.

(*Enter strange, calm LUCY.*)

LUCY. And the air this morning is so sweet you'd think it'd never get dark again.

MINA. But that black dog...

FLORRIE. What black dog, Miss Mina?

LUCY. I saw it! As the boat struck the shore it leapt. From down under the hold to dry land in a single bound and off over the north cliffs like black wind.

FLORRIE. Miss Lucy, you all right? You does look pale.

LUCY. Oh... nothing! I've got a visitor... Must have come in the night... My friend, my bloody friend.

MINA. The curse.

FLORRIE. Oh, Miss Lucy, you've come on. Why didn't you say so? Do you feel poorly, poor thing? Cruel, that's what some of them cramps and drags do be. Do you want to lie down, I bring you herb tea and a hot-water bottle?

MINA. Nonsense, Florrie!

LUCY. I've got to learn not to give in to such weaknesses! Exercise! Exercise like the lady doctor in the Lady's Home Companion recommends. Swedish calisthenics! And no whingeing or the gentlemen'll never threat us as equals.

MINA. No gentleman need ever know.

LUCY. Don't you always feel... unclean? Friend. Friend. How queer, some friend! (act I, scene xi, pp. 104-5)

Florrie's story about the storm and the cursed ship tells us about the arrival of Dracula, but it can also be interpreted as a metaphor for Lucy's shedding of menstrual blood. When Lucy enters, following Florrie's monologue, her appearance is quite changed from the initial portrayal of an anorexic asexual youth prone to hysteria. She is,

according to Lochhead's stage directions, 'strange' and 'calm'. She claims that she has seen the black dog which leapt to the shore from the ship, and when Florrie voices her concern about Lucy's health, the latter explains that she has got 'a visitor'.¹⁰¹ Lucy's alleged seeing of the black dog is in correspondence to Shuttle and Redgrave's suggestion that the time of menstruation, and particularly the girls' first period, is 'an inward-turning time, when old memories walk, and monsters and angels of the inward mind are met'¹⁰². Lucy's experience may therefore be explained, in Shuttle and Redgrave's terms, as 'an increased ability for reverie or daydreaming'¹⁰³, as her turning from the conscious societal driving force towards the unconscious, which is perceived as anti-social and threatening. In other words, what we are witnessing here is Lucy's advent to sexual maturity, the point which is further reflected in Florrie's reference to the paleness of Lucy's complexion. In *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (1991), Christopher Frayling mentions Lavater's suggestion that 'a pale face is indication of a natural inclination towards sexual pleasure'.¹⁰⁴ After her death, Van Helsing refers to her as poor lily-white Lucy, where the lily-white complexion refers to both as a sign of her sexual prowess and as a sign of her death. There is a seeming contradiction in terms since lily also represents innocence. However, the contradiction is purely superficial, it refers to her virginal state before she was born into darkness. This becomes evident when, later in the play, Lochhead describes Lucy as she appears in front of Seward and his companions in her 'vampiric' state:

(And LUCY, lovely and terrifying and ethereal, mist at her toes, comes, almost floating, a rude ragged and palpable boy and girl child like a pair of refugees from Oliver one by each hand. They are sort of sleepwalking. When she sees them, LUCY 'draws back with an angry snarl, her eyes blaze with unholy light and her face

becomes wreathed with a voluptuous smile'. She drops the hands of the children and laughs softly... advancing very very slowly. SEWARD's hands cover his face. JONATHAN backs off in terror and memory of his fantasy with vampire bride...)

LUCY. Come. Come with me, Arthur. Come to me, my arms are hungry for you. Leave these others and come to me, my husband, come.

(SEWARD drops his hands and opens wide his arms, but VAN HELSING, crucifix out between them, leaps. LUCY snarls and recoils into the black and disappears into thin air. (...)) (act I, scene xiii, p. 134)

Lucy's 'vampiric' state, far from being a transformation from a virgin bride to an unclean force, is a transformation from a girl to a mature woman. Crawford and Varty indicate this discrepancy from the literary source by suggesting that while 'Stoker's Dracula condemns Lucy to spiritual damnation, Lochhead's Dracula gives her sexuality'.¹⁰⁵ There is a significant change in tone between Lucy's use of language prior and after her transformation into a vampire bride. Following Lucy's physical transformation, Lochhead also sexualises Lucy's language by shifting it from superficial girlish chatter to language which has assumed strong poetic qualities, which has become rhythmical and evocative and highly seductive for its listeners. By empowering Lucy's and Vampire Brides' use of language, Lochhead sets out the background against which she is going to shift the male characters from a position of power to a position of non-power. This ambiguity in the positionality of gender roles in the interaction/societal hierarchy is reflected in the play by, e.g., constantly shifting between the negative (powerless) and positive (powerful) position of the female characters. This is how, for instance, Lucy is seen as both an asexual anorexic youth, and as a vampire bride who seduces Jonathan in Dracula's castle. In this respect, the scene of seduction and Jonathan's deliverance by Dracula is interesting because in it

Lochhead separates the concepts of love and lust, which are at the core of the double standard on which the separate spheres model is based:

JONATHAN. You'll let me go?

DRACULA. Of course. Open the door immediately, here is my key.
(He gives him the key, makes JONATHAN open the door for himself. DRACULA snaps his fingers and whistles softly as a man does to a dog. The howling of wolves.)

Goodbye, goodbye, my dear friend. As they say, 'Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.' What? You do not go? Let's sleep on it, eh? *(A sweet smile.)* But let me advise you, sweet Jonathan. Do not try the locked doors. This castle is old, it has many memories. Sleep only in your own chamber. Because here, as elsewhere, there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely.
(He exits through the gates with the howling wolves crescendoing in the swirling fog, DRACULA whistling and clicking his tongue at them like a shepherd to some faithful collies. JONATHAN slams and bolts the gate. JONATHAN sinks to his knees with his ironic taunting key in his hand.)

JONATHAN. Oh, Mina, Mina, Mina...

(Strange synthesized music of the vampire-brides theme and them appearing unexpectedly somewhere. In tattered and browning and even slightly bloodstained lacy bridal dresses like bad parodies of Mina's (later)... their hair all fluffed out and them painted up red-lipped, white-faced and hectic. They are recognizably MRS MANNERS (etc.) and FLORRIE and led by LUCY. They whisper together and laugh with a silvery, unreal, glassy, electronic laugh: 'like the intolerable tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand' (Bram Stoker))

VAMPIRE 2. Go on, you are first, and we shall follow.
Yours is the right to begin.

VAMPIRE 1. He is young and strong. You first.

VAMPIRE 3. You think so? Shall I leave you some?

VAMPIRE 2. There are kisses for us all.

VAMPIRE 1. Plenty.

VAMPIRE 2. A sweet sufficiency.

VAMPIRE 3. Give it to me, Jonathan.

JONATHAN. Who - are - you?

(He gives her the key. She kisses it and puts it in her bosom, leans over him.)

VAMPIRES. Who! Who! Who!

(They laugh.)

Who...

(It is a whisper of erotic horror. He moans.)

JONATHAN. Lucy? (act I, scene ix, pp. 99-100)

The key is the metaphor for Jonathan's hope to regain his freedom and return to Mina (spiritual/love). When he is handed the key by Dracula, he is presented with the choice between spiritual/love and physical/lust. Upon Dracula's departure Jonathan is tempted by the three vampire brides - Lochhead is adamant in her stage directions that these should be doubled by the actresses who play Nurse Grice, Florrie and Lucy. Although the immediate, and quite logical, assumption is that she does so to economise the number of actresses, there is another possible explanation for her choice. By doubling the roles, she emphasises the 'vampiric' side of woman's nature. The vampire brides are caricatures of the Romantic ideal of the virginal feminine, and they are dressed in the traditional white bridal dresses which symbolise purity. However, those dresses are tattered and there are blood stains on them, referring to both the periods and the blood shed at defloration. Their hair is fluffed out and their faces are painted, making them reminiscent of madwomen in the attic found in Victorian novels, crazed by the socially unacceptable desires of the flesh. Even their laugh is unnatural. Stoker compares it to 'the intolerable tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand'.¹⁰⁶ Lochhead describes them as full of erotic horror, indicating in this manner that any open expression of sexuality is perceived as threatening. At the end of the scene Jonathan surrenders the key to Vampire Bride 3, doubled by the actress who plays Lucy, in an act of abandoning the spiritual/love represented by Mina in favour of the physical/lust represented by Lucy. This can also be interpreted as the representation of a man's inability to sustain control of the feminine model as seen through his eyes and his weakness before liberated feminine sexuality.

Shuttle and Redgrave further see Dracula as an emanation of woman's fertility. His powers are linked with the land's reproductive power and the waxing and waning of the moon, which are both metaphors of a woman's menstrual cycle and fertility.

An example of the former is Dracula's reference to his country as 'whirlpool' and 'flesh':

DRACULA. My country is a crossroads. No, I do not like this symbol. My country is a whirlpool. Of blood. The Bereskerker, the Hun, the Magyar, the Turk, he came, he conquered, he was conquered, he bred, and he bled. There have been so many battles on this soil that the earth itself... You have a phrase, I think, from your Bible? 'Flesh is grass.' I wish to turn this upside down. Here in my country the grass... is flesh. (act I, scene vii, p. 92)

Interestingly, Dracula refuses the image of the 'crossroads' in favour of the image of the 'whirlpool'. The crossroads reminds him of a crucifix, the symbol of Christianity and a tool allegedly used by the local folk to fight off the vampires. The word also bears the male properties, since Christianity is the religion which celebrates 'maleness'. God is always referred to as 'He', while 'she' is given a secondary position as the receiver of life-giving seed rather than its initiator, which stands in direct opposition to matriarchal pre-Christian religions. For example, when Jonathan shows Dracula a wooden crucifix that he had been given by a peasant woman, Dracula urges him to throw it away. He explains his reaction by the fact that the crucifix is of no particular value:

DRACULA. I simply meant, my friend, that it was lead. Base. I am somewhat of old snob. I cannot bear what is not old... and fine... and beautiful... and precious. That is why I live here all alone with

my memories, the splendid spoils of my ancestors. (act I, scene vii, p. 93)

In view of the above discussion, Dracula's speech may be interpreted as a glorification of pre-Christianity. If we accept that Dracula is a representation of feminine sexuality, it could further symbolise the rejection of the male in favour of the feminine principle which is in the above citation described as 'old', 'fine', 'beautiful' and 'precious'.

The word 'whirlpool', on the contrary, can stand both for the country's unstable position and for the blood shed by the men in wartime. It further stands for the reproductive ability of the soil which gives birth to, literally, food, and, metaphorically, the people whose blood will be shed in nature's never-ending circle. In this sense, the soil's reproductive ability is compared to a woman's fertility. Lochhead's use of the imagery of soil's/woman's fertility corresponds to Sue Ellen Case's proposition in *Feminism and Theatre* (1988) that female gender is associated with sexuality and nature. Lochhead has already hinted at this in her earlier play *Blood and Ice*. To elaborate, mention should be made to two scenes from the play. In the first scene Mary apologises to Florrie for Shelley's behaviour (he has walked in on her and Mary's guests completely naked) and is answered by Florrie that this is only nature. In the second scene Mary warns Claire about pregnancy as a possible consequence of her illicit affair. Claire's answer echoes that of Florrie. Lochhead turns on its head the belief that since femaleness is associated with nature, it is essentially pure, by showing that nature is not necessarily either pure or fair. On the contrary, it is, according to Sade, 'full of viciousness and cruelty and tyranny and ownership'.¹⁰⁷ Crawford and Varty discuss the sadistic aspect of nature and suggest that although the rules have

been established in the wrong places, the abandoning of '(rational) rules altogether unleashes monsters and re-drawing the lines is a devilishly difficult matter'.¹⁰⁸ If this view is applied to the two Lochhead's plays discussed so far, it is evident that Lochhead opposes and destabilises the proposition that the gender division is a natural division. In both plays the feminine is shown as a social and cultural construct by the dominant (male) class that needs to be repeatedly questioned and deconstructed in order to be reexamined and revised. Similarly, the power relationships between the two genders shift in the sense that the author centralises her female protagonists' position. To recapitulate already discussed points, Mary's character in *Blood and Ice* is from the beginning based on a distortion of the virgin/strumpet dichotomy model of the feminine. Mary's elopement with Shelley and giving birth to illegitimate children marks Lochhead's intention, having turned upside down the social and cultural norms, to show the falsity of the Romantic and Victorian stereotypes of the feminine and the position that her female protagonist holds as the subject of her story. All the other characters, both male and female, are shown through the eyes of a female storyteller since Mary Shelley describes her companions and the roles that they play in her story. In *Dracula*, Lochhead further destabilises the cultural norms of Victorian society through initially showing her female protagonists as male-controlled commodities. At the beginning of the play Lucy and Mina are presented as caricatures of the Victorian feminine. This clichéd representation is based on imagery of dolls, mirrors, photographs and food, all of which are used by Lochhead to show the falsity of the cultural norms in view of woman's position in the Victorian society.

Earlier, in the analysis of *Blood and Ice*, the issue of the mind/body dichotomy was discussed as the cause of the split in the 'I' subject of the main protagonist. Shuttle and Redgrave mention this dichotomy with regard to Stoker's *Dracula*, as 'a dialectic between body-consciousness and cerebral consciousness, between the provisional conscious mind and the body-rooted images of the unconscious mind'.¹⁰⁹ A further comparison is drawn between the old powers of Dracula (i.e. magic, bloodsucking as both life-giving and life-taking) and the modern science of Van Helsing (i.e. transfusions). If Deborah Cameron's interpretation of science is taken into account according to which science gives one information about

what men and women are like, and because we take that information as objective fact, what passes for a description of normal gendered behaviour very soon becomes a blueprint for normative gendered behaviour. Scientific discourse might seem to be telling us who we are, but its authority is such that it also has the function of telling us who to be.¹¹⁰

the dialectic between Dracula and Van Helsing's powers can be interpreted as the dialectic between female and male life-giving and life-sustaining force.

If Dracula is an emanation of the feminine principle, in the same sense in which the science is an expression of the masculine principle, then this dialectic corresponds in many ways to the semiotic and symbolic signifying processes proposed by Julia Kristeva, or the Lacanian three phases according to which an individual's acquisition of language will ultimately result in a split between the two subjects, the 'I' who speaks and the 'I' who is spoken about.

In her book *Desire in Language* (1980) Julia Kristeva identifies two signifying processes, semiotic and symbolic, that need to be analysed in any production of meaning. According to Kristeva, the semiotic process relates to the *chora* (receptacle), the term that Kristeva borrowed from Plato. Plato describes *chora* as 'an invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible'.¹¹¹ Kristeva relates this to the maternal function in language. Symbolic process, on the contrary, is related to the 'establishment of sign and syntax, paternal function, grammatical and social constraints, symbolic law'.¹¹² According to both Kristeva's and Lacan's approaches, one enters the symbolic with the consequence of abandoning the semiotic, to use Kristeva's terms; or, in other words, one's entrance into the masculine (paternal) principle will result in one's abandonment of the feminine (maternal) principle. Therefore, the masculine principle is in both cases identified as repressive and negative, rather than empowered and positive, the attributes that Lochhead reserves in her writing for the feminine principle.

The body/mind dichotomy reflects the model which divides the feminine between asexual (virginal) and sexual (demonic). Renfield refers to this dichotomy when he warns Seward not to visit his fiancé:

RENFIELD. She'll let him in and that'll get you! Don't go.
(...)

She sewer-whore, her. Seward, you hear? Oh, sweet Lucy in the daylight, so polite, she got it all sewn up, oh no, no sweat. Come night? They're all mad up in Yorkshire you know, set of screw-looses, screw-looses, screw Lucy's, who doesn't? She ride them all ragged round and round and round and round and round, East Riding, West Riding, north and south. Forgot to watch her mouth.

Swallow his pride. Virgin bride. She'll let him in. That'll get you!
(act I, scene xii, pp. 106-7)

In a culture regulated by rational, cerebral consciousness (masculine principle), the fierceness of the irrational, body consciousness that female sexuality represents is perceived as threatening. Renfield describes Lucy as a loose woman, or a witch, alluding to the magic properties of the irrational, body consciousness. Since Lucy is the representative of the latter, her destruction by Seward, who is a representative of the cerebral consciousness, seems inevitable.

While Lucy resembles Claire Clairmont from *Blood and Ice* in the sense that she is a representative of the irrational (body), Mina is dramatically closer to Mary Shelley, in the sense that she strives to reconcile the two sides. Crawford and Varty point out that Mina's awakening by Dracula is not only to sexual maturity but also to other forms of power, and they illustrate this point with a scene from *Dracula*:

(Everything is cleared away and, in the mist and darkness, appear the heavy gates of Dracula's castle. Three great thumps at them from behind and they bulge and strain, but hold. Silence after the third battery, and MINA's voice is heard ringing out clearly, from behind these gates at the back of the stage.)

MINA. Stand aside, you men!

(The gates fly open wide (or fall down). The mist clears and we see MINA, wrapped in furs and deathly pale, blindfolded, reaching out straight ahead of her. Quite far back, held behind VAN HELSING's outstretched arm, are the amazed-looking JONATHAN and SEWARD. There are flurries of snow outside and on all their clothes.)

SEWARD. She only had to touch!

MINA. We are home now at the black heart of him. I knew it.
(...)

Untie my eyes and let me see.

([Jonathan] does so. Even more obvious now is the red mark left by the Communion Host. MINA holds the blindfold, her eyes still shut.

Then opens them, blinking. The others look around, afraid, alert all during MINA's next speech.)

All these weeks in the dark with those I loved, travelling blind. My other senses told me I was on a railway train - the smell of smoke, the sound and vibration of the iron wheels - but behind my eyes I was on the open seas. You fed me oranges; I smelt the peel, spat out the pips, but all the time I tasted blood. Then all around me the noise and bustle of an English port, whilst already in the darkness of my own head I was landed on a European shore. You comforted me in my cabin while all along I sped in a black coach behind a dark driver who whipped six black horses faster than the wind and the wheels hardly bumped on rutted roads. When you crowded me round, protecting me from the gasps and fear and hatred of the inn girls who saw my mark, and you spoon-fed me with stew and rye bread among the babble of foreign tongues, I was already here alone on the high crag of my castle and when you, my husband, held me tight and tethered to the earth in strange bed after strange bed, while you slept I flew wild and free in the night. (act II, scene xvii, p. 144)

The men's physical force could not open the gates of Dracula's castle, but they swung open upon Mina's voice and touch. Lochhead describes Mina as 'deathly pale' in order to indicate her state of sexual prowess. She is also 'blindfolded', and her inability to see makes her use the other senses. This can be interpreted as Mina's use of other forms of consciousness as opposed to the cerebral, rational mind (masculine principle). Once her blindfold is removed, her ability to use both frightens her male companions. Mina's awakening is to her intellectual and emotional maturity. It is also an empowerment through language. The act of flinging the gates open by word and touch represents Mina's mastering of the verbal (rational, male) and body (irrational, female) languages. Mina surpasses the homoglossic, denotative use of language in favour of heteroglossic, connotative use based on rich olfactory imagery such as the smell of smoke and the orange peel, the taste of pips and blood. This interpretation of Mina's transformation as a linguistic transformation from a silenced powerless woman to an equal participant in communication with the opposite gender, brings to mind

Jonathan's and Dracula's conversation in act I, scene vii, and reinterprets it as an attempt by the feminine principle to intrude upon and to master language which is shaped by the dominant (male) culture. Dracula's complaint that he does not possess full mastery of the English language could be compared with Lochhead's concern with whether it is possible for a female author to take control of her narrative. Dracula's complaint is dismissed by Jonathan who is obviously unwilling to prolong his visit with the Count, thus reflecting the reluctance of the masculine principle within the language, or Male Muse, to give way to the feminine principle, or Female Muse. Dracula's answer, in turn, indicates Lochhead's own doubts whether a female author has a sufficient mastery of the male dominated language to turn the phrase, that is, to express herself by it. The masculine principle of language is further implied through Dracula's indication that the sole master of the living tongue is 'a splendid specimen of the upright young *man*'.¹¹³ Lochhead compares language to lifeblood and she also uses food and drink imagery with regard to it. Dracula wishes to *drink in* words, *digest* them. In this way, she intensifies the link between language and creation, the issue she has already discussed in *Blood and Ice*. Ironically, Dracula wishes Jonathan to teach him so that he can 'put on [his] straw hat and come out from the garden of [his] Carfax, a real English *man*'.¹¹⁴ In other words, he wishes to become Jonathan's imitation. Yet, as earlier proposed, Dracula is not a masculine force, but, on the contrary, it is a representation of feminine sexuality and creative force. If this is so, then Dracula's words could be interpreted as an intention of a feminine principle to adopt male properties and express itself through the medium which is alien to it. This is reflected in the initial compliance of female characters in *Dracula* to be shaped by

male cultural imperatives; the compliance which Mina is going to surpass at the end of the play.

It is obvious from Mina's speech at the gates of Dracula's castle that she has found her imagination - 'the darkness of her head' ¹¹⁵ - a liberating force that enables her to see beyond the everyday and the obvious. This experience is both intellectually and sexually liberating. Mina has managed to break free from the tethers of a man's bed, which is foreign to her since its function is to express male sexuality. She has overcome the limitations that her husband's sexuality has imposed on her and has found in her imagination a way of openly expressing her own sexuality. In the final scene of the play, Jonathan makes love to Mina on Dracula's cape, whose red colour symbolises her lifeblood, her sexual desires. With this act, he accepts Mina as his spiritual and sexual equal. The red petals which fall around them and replace the white snow flakes, wash away the last traces of the false notion of the feminine as fixed and asexual.

3.5. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off (1987)*

The play begins with the two queens, Elizabeth and Mary, being wooed by Europe's leaders. The relationships between the two women are established through their conversation with their emissaries. It is a struggle for power symbolised in the race to produce the next heir to the throne of England. Mary's fate is revealed in the scenes that depict her conflict with John Knox over religion, her marriage to Darnley (skillfully plotted and brought about by Elizabeth), Darnley's death, Mary's subsequent relationship with Bothwell, imprisonment and execution in London.

The third play under consideration in this chapter is *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (hereafter: *Mary Queen of Scots*), written and first produced in

1987 by Comunicado at the Lyceum Studio Theatre, Edinburgh. Lochhead admits that, though it was one of the most difficult plays to write, it is also 'her favourite' ¹¹⁶ and 'her best work' ¹¹⁷, the one in which she succeeded to catch the spirit of Scotland through the depiction of a popular historical theme and use of Scottish language. The importance of the myth about Queen Mary is immeasurable for Scottish political and cultural histories alike. I. B. Cowan claims in his work *Enigma of Mary Stuart* (1971) that the myth extends to all aspects of the queen's life in the sense that her beauty, and the tragic circumstances of her downfall, captivity and execution have 'undoubtedly swayed the judgements of many historians who might otherwise have condemned her. And in the realms of literature, it has rendered her position impregnable.' ¹¹⁸ Indeed many playwrights have tackled the life story of the unfortunate queen, but no one has ever exploded the myth in quite as radical a way as Lochhead does in her play. Everything is here; the historical facts, the sexual, political and clerical intrigues. Those critics who have chosen to interpret the play as Lochhead's re-examination of the Scottish past and present, and as her attempt to draw parallels between the images of the woman (Mary) and the land (Scotland) are not far off the mark. However, although it contains all of the necessary ingredients of a historical play *Mary Queen of Scots* can also be read as the next logical step in Lochhead's exploration of female identity. In analysing *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula*, a common denominator was evident with regard to the main issues that Lochhead explored in those plays. Both plays, while focusing on the female characters, employ the popular mythologies surrounding these characters. For instance, in *Blood and Ice* Lochhead offers her interpretation of a historical person, Mary Shelley, and in *Dracula* her heroines, Mina and Lucy Westerman, have been taken from Bram Stoker's novel.

This is a significant common aspect to be borne in mind in attempting a character analysis in *Mary Queen of Scots*. The fact that Lochhead is not interested in mimetic representation of reality has already been mentioned in this chapter. Mary Shelley from *Blood and Ice* is not a mimetic representation of the historical person. Similarly, Lochhead's representation of Mina and Lucy from *Dracula* is twice removed from the historical viewpoint in the sense that it is her representation of Stoker's representation of the protagonists of the ancient myth. During the discussion about *Mary Queen of Scots* with the author of this study, Lochhead admitted that when writing the play she did not wish to recreate history. On the contrary, her intention was to expose 'the clichés that Queens Mary and Elizabeth [had] to play (...) [and] the actual human figures underneath them'.¹¹⁹ For this purpose she sacrifices and alters the historical facts in order to explore the ways in which historical and individual identities interact through the characters' relationships. In the cases of Mary Shelley, Mary Stuart and Elizabeth, Lochhead departs from the historical sources in order to recreate personal herstories of these well-known public figures and to explore the position of a woman in the hierarchy of power. In the case of Mina and Lucy Westerman, Lochhead uses imaginary characters, based on another author's novel, to create new mythologies told from the female perspective. In both cases, by re-historicising and remythologising the accepted histories/mythologies, Lochhead creates a herstory which is different from and often radically opposite to mainstream (man-made) history, offering a woman-made and a woman-told myth of a sort. She does this in *Mary Queen of Scots* through several theatrical devices, all of them non-naturalistic and purposefully distancing in order to make the audience aware that what they see before them is not a piece of history but an author's representation of certain historical events and

personae. The analysis which follows will focus on the three devices Lochhead uses to remythologise Mary's historical person: use of chorus, role-doubling, and use of language. It must be pointed out that these devices were not Lochhead's own invention: they reflect dramaturgic experiments from the seventies, starting with the innovative work of John McGrath (*The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, 1973) and Ian Brown (*Mary*, 1977) in the field of Scottish historical drama. Also, although analysis of national identity is not one of the objectives in this discussion, it will be briefly referred to because it bears a considerable significance with regard to the main themes in the play.

Lochhead's rejection of mimetic representation and frequent use of a distancing method were already mentioned in the analysis of *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula*. In the 1982 version of *Blood and Ice* the entire action is set in Mary Shelley's mind, which results in the play's temporal and spatial fragmentation among other things, as well as fragmentation of the other characters' representation through role-doubling, the use of plural narratives and metatextuality, and the cinematographic clichés of the myth of Frankenstein. In *Dracula* Lochhead makes use of Gothic clichés, often associated with horror films, and stereotypes linked with vampire mythology. As in *Blood and Ice*, Lochhead interpolates scenes and dialogues from other sources (in this case, Stoker's novel), and the linear plotline is fragmented through the quick exchange of short scenes, in cinematographic fashion. In *Mary Queen of Scots* Lochhead goes a step further in her use of these devices. She further fragments the linearity of the plot through interpolation of ceilidh-like song and dance sequences, and through reestablishing the function of the chorus which is embodied in the figure of La Corbie.

The figure of La Corbie is fashioned on two sources. On the one hand, she bears similarities with a classical Greek chorus, acting as a communal consciousness and an all-knowing commentator. On the other hand, she functions as a Celtic bard, telling her audience a story in the form of songs and short witty comments. Lochhead's decision to assign La Corbie female attributes is a signifier that her intention is to tell the story from the female perspective, rather than from the historically-accepted male perspective. It would be possible to draw parallels between Lochhead's choice of La Corbie's gender and an interpretation of the play based on a comparison between a country and a woman, but to explore this would be tangential to the chosen line of analysis. It is therefore only noted here, for focus will be on the way Lochhead uses La Corbie to comment on the play's action and the protagonists' positions and relationships within it.

From the outset La Corbie assumes the function of a storyteller whose voice emerges from its timelessness to tell the story of the past. In this sense, she becomes Lochhead's spokesperson who introduces the readers/audience to the scenes through either her words or her actions (e.g. through cracking her whip), as well as providing the comments on those actions. She is always present on the stage, however, she is placed outside the story itself, or is superimposed onto it, and only in one instance does she figure in a dialogue with another character in the play. At the end of act I, scene iv, Knox walks off the stage following his row with Mary over her religious allegiance to the Catholic Church. Mary is left on her own, praying. It is in that moment that La Corbie steps into the reality of the play and addresses her:

LA CORBIE. Gin ye want to gag Maister Knox you will hae
tae abolish the Mass and embrace his cauld kirk.

MARY. And is there nae comfort in his kerque?

LA CORBIE. Aye. Cauld comfort. But there are those wha
say it a' the better suits the climate.

MARY. And you think gin I sat on St Giles's hard pews
on a Sunday I'd sit surer oan ma ain throne a' week lang?

LA CORBIE. Nae doot aboot that!
He has cowped the Queen o' Heaven so how could he worry 'bout
cowpin' a mere earthly queen?

MARY. Then the Protestants dinnae love oor Blessed
Virgin?

LA CORBIE. Knox has torn the Mother of God from oot the
sky o' Scotland and has trampit her celestial blue goon among the
muck and mire and has blotted oot every name by which ye praise
her - Stella Maris, Star of the Sea, Holy Mother, Notre Dame, Oor
Lady o' Perpetual Succour.

MARY. But if he hae torn her frae the blue sky what has
he left in her place?

LA CORBIE. A black hole, a jaggit gash, *naethin'*.

MARY. But how should I live without Our Lady?

LA CORBIE. Easy. You hae livit withoot yir earthly mother,
sae ye can live without your heavenly yin.

MARY. I will marry wha I can love!

(Exit MARY.) (act I, scene iv, pp. 22-3)

Although she steps into the reality of the play, La Corbie does not really become a character, rather she steps out of her function as the author's voice and into the voice of Mary's consciousness. In this way, she voices the inner struggle that Mary goes through when faced with Knox's efforts to convert her from Catholicism and influence her choice of a spouse, or destroy her if she does not comply. Her conversation with La Corbie in these terms can be interpreted as a representation of the split in her character, a dialogue between Mary's conscious and unconscious mind. Lochhead depicts La Corbie as a figure who exists outside time and history, symbolising the female subconsciousness which intrudes into traditional (man-made) history in order to show the ways in which it has marginalised a woman's experience. This is particularly emphasised in Mary's and La Corbie's conversation about the absence of the Virgin

Mary from Knox's church. The rejection of the Virgin Mary, which La Corbie refers to as 'a black hole, a jaggit gash, *naethin*',¹²⁰ is the rejection of an iconic female figurehead. The rejection of the Virgin Mary is also rejection of Queen Mary, of the female authority in both the Church and the State. It is rejection by the symbolic (paternal) principle of the semiotic (maternal principle) which is the cause of the split in Mary Stuart's character, and which will be the cause of her subsequent downfall.

In her role as the play's commentator, besides the setting up of the mood of a certain scene and commenting on the events, La Corbie also comments on the protagonists. Her comments draw the audience's attention to the schism between the accepted historical interpretations of the protagonists, the ways in which they perceive themselves and each other, and the ways in which they are perceived as the characters in the play by their author. Interestingly, in her portrayal of Mary, Lochhead uses the historical accounts, such as those of Ian B. Cowan or Antonia Fraser, which reinforce Mary's position as a tragic, and often romanticised figure. Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie refer to this in their article 'Putting New Twists to Old Stories: Feminism and Lochhead's Drama',¹²¹ when they comment that 'Lochhead does not, as she might well have done, go so far as to foreground historical sources that undermine the romantic image of the martyr Queen and present Mary as a highly political woman who comes to grief because of the power of the forces ranged against her rather than as a result of her own inadequacies'.¹²² For example, La Corbie inverts the tragic element in Mary's character with her ironic comments which offer a different description of Mary as an ill-advised young woman who has been carried away by her emotional needs and desires. This draws McDonald and Harvie to conclude that 'Lochhead offers the

audience not a re-vision of the historical Mary, but a re-vision of the myth that popular culture has built up around her'.¹²³ Upon carefully reading the play, one cannot but wonder whether Lochhead has actually set out to approach the both. She herself has mentioned, in the interview given to the author of this study, her interest in exploring the relationship between historical and mythic, as well as public and personal representations of individuals. In this sense, her interpretation of Mary is actually re-vision of both historical and mythic elements of the queen's life-story.

Lochhead's mistrust of traditional histories as fixed, and often inaccurate, representations of the truth perpetuated by the dominant patriarchal ideology is reflected in the opening scene of the play, 'Scotland, Whit Like?', where she uses juxtaposition to restate and reframe ideas about the identity of Scotland and Scottishness.

LA CORBIE.

Country: Scotland. Whit like is it?
 It's a peatbog, it's a daurk forest.
 It's a cauldron o'lye, a saltpan or a coal mine.
 If you're gey lucky it's a bricht bere meadow
 or a park o'kye.
 Or mibbe... it's a field o' stanes.
 It's a tenement or a merchant's ha'.
 It's a hure hoose or a humble cot. Princes
 Street or Paddy's Merkit.
 It's a fistfu' o' fish or a pickle o' oatmeal.
 It's a queen's banquet o' roast meats and
 junketts.
 It depends. It depends... Ah dinna ken whit
 like *your* Scotland is. Here's mines.
 National flower: the thistle.
 National pastime: nostalgia.
 National weather: smirr, haar, drizzle, snow.
 National bird: the crow, the corbie, le corbeau,
 moi!
 How me? Eh? Eh? Eh? Voice like a choked
 laugh. Ragbag o' a burd in ma black duds, a'

angles and elbows and broken oxter feathers,
black beady een in ma executioner's hood. No
braw, but Ah think Ah ha'e a sort of black
glamour.

Do I no put ye in mind of a skating minister,
or, on the other fit, the parish priest, the dirty
beast?

My nest's a rickle o' sticks.

I live on lamb's eyes and road accidents.

Oh, see, after the battle, after the battle, man,
it's a pure feast - my belly thinks my throat's
been cut. (act I, scene i, pp. 11-2)

In La Corbie's voice, Lochhead gives us different representations of Scotland, and insists that 'it depends' ¹²⁴ from whose perspective the country is looked at. The Scotland that she portrays is the Scotland as she sees it, as an author and as a woman; it is Scotland looked at through a woman's eyes. La Corbie describes herself as a 'ragbag o' a burd in [her] black duds, a' angles and elbows and broken oxter feathers, black beady een in [her] executioner's hood. No braw but (...) [with] a sort of black glamour'. ¹²⁵ The visual image of that bird is often associated with bleakness, anxiety and death, however, it can also be seen as an image of an elderly woman in ragged clothes, the image of Scottish hag, or a witch. In this way the notion that this is a story told about a woman and from a woman's perspective is emphasised yet again, before La Corbie assumes her storytelling function and introduces the first scene by telling the story about the two queens. The fact that the story is told in the form of a folk-tale suggests the interpretation that the history which is presented on the stage is yet another form of a folk-tale, and can be unfixed and changed based on a storyteller's perspective or perspectives. This suggests that history, or rather histories, in the traditional sense, are volatile. For instance, Sir George Clark refutes the concept of

'ultimate history' in his introduction to *The Cambridge Modern History: Its Origin, Authorship and Production* (1907):

[Historians of a later generation] expect their work to be superseded again and again. They consider that knowledge of the past has come down through one or more human minds, has been 'processed' by them, and therefore cannot consist of elemental and impersonal atoms which nothing can alter... The exploration seems to be endless, and some impatient scholars take refuge in scepticism, or at least in the doctrine that, since all historical judgements involve persons and points of view, one is as good as another and there is no 'objective' historical truth.¹²⁶

Similarly, Talcott Parsons calls history 'a selective system of cognitive orientations to reality',¹²⁷ thus rejecting the belief in immutable historical facts which exist independently of a historian's interpretation. E. H. Carr supports this claim and further comments that 'our picture has been preselected and predetermined for us, not so much by accident as by people who were consciously or unconsciously imbued with a particular view and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving.'¹²⁸ E. H. Carr further suggests that a historian's standpoint is always rooted a particular social and historical background - 'the brain of the brain-washer has itself been washed'¹²⁹ - thus signifying that historical facts are always chosen and controlled by the dominant social forces.

It is Lochhead's intention to show the subjectivity of history and the possible ways of reinterpreting it. She is also set on illustrating, in the context of the play, 'the crudity of people's ideas still about the things Queen Mary had been fighting about (...) [and] that none of those things have been resolved in those hundreds of years. [One has] still got a nation of blindfold people'.¹³⁰ An instance of this can be found in the closing

scene of *Mary Queen of Scots*, called 'Jock Thamson's [*sic*] Bairns', in which Scotland's political playground is transformed into the present day children's playground, and the historical figures are depicted as the school children who in their games display bigotry and cruelty in equal amount to the historical figures whom they impersonate. This scene sheds quite a different light on the rest of the play; the absurdity of the previous events is stressed, and the protagonists' roles in the historic framework are deconstructed beyond recognition.

Lochhead suggests that the central conflict in *Mary Queen of Scots* is gender based, when she observes that this is a play about the position of 'a king as a woman [being] in conflict with the life as a king, whereas the life of the king is in conflict with his/her gender from the start'.¹³¹ This point is alluded to in La Corbie's tale about 'wan green island (...) split inty twa kingdoms'¹³² and run by the twa queens. La Corbie shows the kingdoms of England and Scotland as kingless, 'headless' societies whose imbalance is due to the non-existence of a king (a patriarch). Mary refers to this imbalance when she suggests that if Elizabeth were a man she, Mary, would have willingly married her in order to resolve the debate. Here she refers to the ongoing debate regarding to the identity of future potentate to English and Scottish thrones, illustrated in the first scene, where Elizabeth and Mary are approached by the ambassadors with marriage offers from various foreign nobles. In this scene, Lochhead shows Elizabeth and Mary as puppets, similar to her representation of female protagonists in *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula*. Elizabeth and Mary are raised up on the pageants raised in the corners, or strutted about the stage, while the noblemen and commoners alike move from one pageant to another, commenting on the women's

likely choice of spouses. Lochhead broadens the gap between personal and political by re-examining two functions which are traditionally linked with female identity, those of marriage and motherhood. Both of those functions become political devices for achieving national agendas, namely they both serve for the sole purpose of perpetuation of a social order. In accordance to this, Mary's son, the future king, is always mentioned with regard to political schemes, and Mary shows a remarkable lack of maternal feeling for him. The audience is shocked into understanding that motherhood is not a major part of Mary's character; rather, it represents a social function which, after having been accomplished, is never discussed. This enables Lochhead to show different representations of the two women without being bound to those representations which pertain to their biological function. She is at all times careful to distinguish between these women's public and private appearances, as queens and as women. For instance, the schism between Mary the queen and Mary the woman is emphasised throughout the play in Lochhead's constant undermining of Mary's authority. In the previously cited quotation from act I, scene iv, it can be seen how La Corbie draws attention to a woman's inferior position in the social hierarchy by comparison of the two Marys - a heavenly queen and an earthly one. In this way she shows how the feminine principle, embodied in the figure of the Virgin Mary, has been banished from Knox's church in favour of the masculine principle, embodied in the figure of Christ. Knox is shown as an unsympathetic figure; he is a representative of the repressive societal force which has cast all women into the role of a demonic temptress. In the course of his debate with Mary, Knox calls her a siren, and in act I, scene vi ('Mary Queen of Scots's Progress and John Knox's Shame') Lochhead paraphrases his 'The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of

Women' so as to show his intolerance both of the rule of women, which he believes to be 'an abomination against nature and before God', and of Catholicism, which he calls 'the vanity and iniquity of the papistical religion in all its pestilent manifestation in Sodom priesthooses and poxetten nunneries'.¹³³ Similarly, in act I, Queen Mary is portrayed by Knox and Bothwell as a silly, spoilt little girl without any real political power:

KNOX.	She's only a silly spilte wee French lassie, Bothwell.
BOTHWELL.	Only a silly spilte wee French lassie wha could cowp the kirk and cut your heid aff, John Knox.
KNOX.	She's only a queen.
BOTHWELL.	<i>(As they begin to exit)</i> And what's a queen?
KNOX.	Juist a silly, spilte, wee lassie. <i>(And they are gone.)</i> (act I, scene 6, p. 34)

Through the juxtaposition of such opposing representations of Mary's character, based on the difference between the male and female perspectives, Lochhead strives to re-examine the representation of women in literature, particularly in view of the conflicting personal and public demands made on them by the dominant ideology. McDonald and Harvie suggest that Lochhead represents these conflicting demands through the use of 'cross-cutting and role-playing techniques which highlight the similarities and contrasts in the choices open to the two women and in the decisions they take'.¹³⁴ Also, in her portrayal of the female protagonists Lochhead turns towards the examination of another prevalent issue that she discusses in many of her plays, that of the concept of sisterhood. In *Mary Queen of Scots*, she examines this concept by means of the characters' juxtaposition, as already mentioned, and by means

of role-doubling. The characters of the two queens are juxtaposed in La Corbie's introductory speech in which Mary's and Elizabeth's differences are emphasised:

LA CORBIE. Once upon a time there were *two queens* on the wan green island, and the wan green island was split inty twa kingdoms. But no equal kingdoms, naebody in their richt mind would insist on that. For the northern kingdom was cauld and sma'. And the people were low-statured and ignorant and feart o' their lords and poor! They were starvin'. And their queen was beautiful and tall and fair and... Frenchified. The other kingdom in the island was large, and prosperous, with wheat and barley and fat kye in the fields o' her yeoman farmers, and wool in her looms, and beer in her barrels and, at the mouth of her greatest river, a great port, a glistening city that sucked all wealth to its centre which was a palace and a court of a queen. She was a cousin, a clever cousin a wee bit aulder, and mibbe no sae braw as the other queen, but a queen nevertheless. Queen o' a country wi' an army, an' a navy and dominion over many lands. (...) (act I, scene i, p. 12)

The differences between Mary and Elizabeth are based both on their physical appearances and on the economic and military strength of their respective kingdoms. The two have come together: the woman has become the representation of the land, and, vice versa, the land has become the representation of its queen. Having summed up all of their differences, Lochhead goes on to indicate that amongst a few similarities between the two women is the fact that they hold the same senior position in their respective countries. They have certain familial links with each other (they are cousins), they both lost their mothers in early childhood, and they are going through the process of grieving. In infancy Mary had been sent to France, away from her mother, which resulted in her linguistic and cultural displacement from the Scottish people who mock the frenchified queen. It further resulted in the schism in her inner identity. She is both French and Scottish by birth, but feels like a stranger in both environments. She is also a woman who is a head of the state, which is a contradiction

in terms. Similarly, in a dream sequence, Elizabeth is haunted by the image of a headless doll which represents her mother and which is tossed away by the royal figure who represents her father. This can be interpreted as Elizabeth's inner conflict caused by the requirement of her regal responsibility to abandon her feminine nature. Both women are hailed as virgins, for Mary is still a virgin despite the fact that she has been married and widowed, and Elizabeth is often referred to as the Virgin Queen. Moreover, they are both unmarried, and both are courted by the same suitors but choose to have liaisons with a subject. Lochhead makes extensive use of juxtaposition devices such as the imagery of mirrors and pictures, which, as in *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula*, are a means of emphasising both the differences and the similarities between the two characters. For instance, Mary refers to a miniature portrait of herself that she sent Elizabeth, and that she hopes Elizabeth wears round her neck:

MARY. Bessie, do you think she'll meet me?
 BESSIE. Aye, your majesty, she'll meet wi' ye face to
 face at York, an' you're richt, gin ye talk thegither it'll a' be soarted
 oot. If ye hunt a' they courtiers and politicians an' *men* awa!
 LA CORBIE. She shall never meet you face to face.
 MARY. They say she wears my portrait I sent her in
 that wee jewelled case hangin' fae her girdle. And she sent me an
 emerald.
 LA CORBIE. Oh aye...! (act I, scene iii, p. 16)

McDonald and Harvie have pointed out that the representation of Elizabeth as the holder of the power to choose to wear the locket or not is emblematic of her control of Mary's destiny. Mary's maid Bessie suggests that everything will be well if Mary talks to Elizabeth, and puts herself at Elizabeth's mercy, because as a woman she might be more lenient than male politicians. Bessie also alludes to the fact that Mary's current position has been caused by men - 'courtiers and politicians an' men'.¹³⁵ La

Corbie's interruption echoes Mary's own doubt that Elizabeth will ever see her. Mary tries to reassure herself that Elizabeth might be an ally after all, after all she did send her an expensive gift in the shape of an emerald, but La Corbie is not so convinced. An emerald is often seen as a symbol of purity, for example, Philip Thompson and Peter Davenport suggest in their *Dictionary of Visual Language* (1980) that green is a symbol of freshness and 'the idea of natural purity'.¹³⁶ However, it can also be seen as a signifier of 'a simple, or gullible person.'¹³⁷ In this sense, it can be taken as a clear sign of Elizabeth's unwillingness to get involved and lend a helping hand to her cousin. This is another indication of her dominant position, alongside the juxtaposition of the two characters. In this fashion, Lochhead strives to show that any representation is 'a falsification of similarities, objectification, and appropriation'.¹³⁸

Besides juxtaposition, the other technique by which McDonald and Harvie feel that Lochhead has further managed to prevent 'continuous identification by the audience with the plight of any one dramatic character'¹³⁹ is the role-doubling. Role-doubling is one of Lochhead's favoured techniques, and she has used it to one extent or another in all of the three plays that are under consideration in this chapter. In act I, scene iii of *Mary Queen of Scots*, titled 'Queens and Maids', at the crack of La Corbie's whip the actress playing Elizabeth turns into Bessie, Mary's maid, while several lines later '*with a drumbeat, or a flash of lightning - [another] change, ELIZABETH, proud queen, is on a pedestal, preening, as MARY becomes, in that instant, modest MARIAN, ELIZABETH's gentlewoman*'.¹⁴⁰ Lochhead constantly draws her audience's attention to the fact that what they see before them are the two actresses who double as the two queens who double as their maids. In this manner she creates an awareness in her

audience that what is really happening before them is representation of a reality which is twice removed from the reality that it is supposed to be being represented. She uses a similar role-doubling technique in act I, scene vi, where the actresses who represent the two queens transform into Mairn and Leezie, the teenage prostitutes who tempt Knox during the street parade scene:

(Everybody except KNOX, LEEZIE and MAIRN exit. LEEZIE and MAIRN are rolling on the ground among the dirt, laughing, whispering and staring at KNOX.)

LEEZIE. He wis. He wis starin'. Gauin'. Ask him, Mairn!

MAIRN. Dinna, Leezie, dinna. Ah canny.

LEEZIE. Starin' ett ye! He'll ken ye the next time, honestly! Lukks lik' he's juist back fae a funeral! He'll be definitely wantin' a wee bit rumplefyke then... *(Shouts)* Haw, maister, ma pal wants tae ken if ye want tae go wi' her?

MAIRN. Come awa', Leezie...

KNOX. Awa' and pray the Lord tae forgive ye. You're nobbut weans!

LEEZIE. Well, yon's no whit ye said last week!

(She runs off, wild coarse laughter, a rude sign, a flashed bum, or a bent arm. KNOX right at MAIRN and everything freezes. LEEZIE in her cheeky running away; MAIRN suddenly straight and tall, totally MARY in our eyes, and in KNOX's, as he chides a cheeky wee harlot on the cauld Canongate. KNOX's hand raised in anger but stayed in awe.)

KNOX. By Christ. Ah'll tan yir arse fur ye ya wee hoor o' Babylon. Lukk at ye! Wi' yir lang hair lik' a flag in the wind an advertisement o' lust tae honest men an' they big roon een lik' a dumb animal, slinkan along the road wi' yir hurdies hingin' oot yir sark an' yon smell all ye, ya durty wee fork-arsed bitch ye. Nae wonder it is written in the Guid Book that your kind are the very gate and port o' the devil - Ah'll leave the rid mark o' ma haun on your white flesh afore Ah -

(Moment of ambiguity passes, it's a wee tart again, KNOX is back in control of himself.)

Awa' and behave! Pray God forgive you and sin nae mair. (act I, scene vi, p. 33)

Bearing in mind the role-doubling between Mary and Mairn, Knox's speech is full of openly sexual connotations rather than an accusation by a righteous man. He shouts at Mairn/Mary that he will 'leave the rid mark o' [his] haun on [her] white flesh afore [he] -' ¹⁴¹ This is an openly ambiguous statement - the emphasising of the whiteness of a female skin and allusions to violence and bondage bear strong erotic connotations of a man's control over a woman's body and mind. Knox compares Mairn/Mary with 'a wee hoor of Babylon (...) whose lang hair lik' a flag in the wind an advertisement o' lust tae honest men'. ¹⁴² A woman's beauty is a trap, a temptation which corrupts honest men and makes them 'roon een lik' a dumb animal'. ¹⁴³ However, a woman's beauty has been fashioned to please a man's eye; that is, it has been shaped by patriarchal cultural imperatives. In this sense Knox's speech can be interpreted as an expression of the supremacy of the masculine principle over the feminine principle. Knox's zest disappears as soon as the Mairn/Mary ambiguity is lost, for he is aroused by the notion of a woman with power, but a little peasant prostitute is of no interest to him.

The role-doubling device is not strictly reserved only for the female protagonists. The actor who plays Riccio doubles as the Dancer, all of the actors parade as the animals in the introductory scene, and in the final scene they are transformed into the children in Lochhead's ironic comment on the unchangeability of history. Furthermore, the same actor doubles as Darnley and Leicester, who are the respective love interests of the two queens. Role-doubling of male characters in *Mary Queen of Scots* could be usefully explored in relation to re-examining and re-defining the concept of the eternal masculine. However, this is beyond the scope of the present discussion's focus on

Lochhead's use of role-doubling as a way of turning on its head an apparent similarity between the two queens and showing the different ways in which the two women deal with the split between their private and public functions. Although Lochhead never provides us with a dialogue between the two characters, since they never actually meet, their relationship is developed and expressed through their conversations with their maids. Also, it is possible to determine the position of the two characters within the communicational hierarchy on the basis of the choices that they make, and the language mode that they use. For instance, Elizabeth assumes the role of a manipulator (male role), with her decision that if she marries, '[she] shall marry (...) as queen and not as Elizabeth'.¹⁴⁴ Thus, she consciously sacrifices her love for Leicester in favour of her duty towards her subjects. Mary, on the contrary, chooses the role of the manipulated, which is a female role, in her insistence that when she marries it will be for love, and not duty. Her unwillingness to play according to the rules of the public domain, which is a man's domain, makes her threatening. Therefore, she inevitably comes to be considered a liability that needs to be disposed of by both the Scottish noblemen and Elizabeth. Lochhead leaves Elizabeth's role in Mary's execution undefined. It is her intention to suggest that regardless of their respective positions they are both victims - alluded to in their representation as puppets in act I, scene ii ('The Suitors') - and in such a way as to stress the responsibility of the male authorities, legal and clerical, for both women's victimisation. In Lochhead's eyes, Elizabeth is no less a loser for having to renounce her feminine principle and assume a male role in order to sustain her throne. Furthermore, the manipulator/manipulated dichotomy reminds one of the mind/body dichotomy which Lochhead has explored in the previous two plays, in the sense of Elizabeth representing the former, and Mary the

latter. However, there is another possible interpretation of this dichotomy which brings to mind the association between land and a woman's body. As John Cunningham implied in an interview in *The Guardian* of 8 February 1990: 'The English, she suggests, are like men - nonchalant and unquestioning about existing. [By contrast,] Scotland is like a woman; the Scots know they are perceived from the outside'.¹⁴⁵ According to this interpretation the two characters can be seen as the two representations of contrasted representations of the two nations' identities, the hegemoniser and the hegemonised.

In *Mary Queen of Scots*, Lochhead tackles the issues of gender and national identities through the use of language on two levels. The first level is interpolation of poetic language in the naturalistic narrative. The second level is the use of Scots language which sets up the prevalent mood of the play as well as the relationships among its protagonists. An example of the interpolation of poetic language in the naturalistic narrative has already been mentioned with regard to La Corbie's use of songs and wry one-liners which makes up the backbone of the play. The characters' use of either English or Scots is represented not only in the way they speak but also in the ways in which their use of language is seen by the other characters. The two main female protagonists are sharply contrasted through the language modes that they use. On the one hand, Elizabeth uses a rigid and often stereotyped form of court English, which makes a clear-cut distinction between use of the first person plural when one refers to oneself as the queen, as in 'We do not think we could marry a *king!*',¹⁴⁶ and use of the first person singular when one refers to oneself as a woman, as in 'Methinks they do try to play me and my Scotch cousin off against each other.'¹⁴⁷ On the other hand,

Mary speaks Scots and is ridiculed by Elizabeth and her gentlewoman Marian for writing poetry in Scots (act I, scene iii). Lindsay Paterson suggests in 'Language and Identity on the Stage' ¹⁴⁸ that unlike earlier historical plays by e.g. Donald Campbell and John Oglivie, Lochhead does not use Scots and English for contrasting social class and national identity. He goes on to maintain that, for Lochhead, 'identity (...) is not a straightforward matter' ¹⁴⁹ and draws attention to Mary and Elizabeth's switching language modes in order to play each other's maid, as well as the fact that although Mary speaks Scots, she is disengaged from it due to having been removed from Scotland and taken to France in early childhood. In this manner, Mary is alienated both from her English cousin and her Scottish subjects because of her French accent and frequent interpolation of French phrases into Scots. Other characters depict her as a foreign presence in Scotland: in La Corbie's introductory speech she is described as 'frenchified', Knox warns her that she does not understand the country she is the queen of, and he and Bothwell subsequently refer to her as a 'French lassie'. Mary speaks Scots with a noticeable French accent. For example, she says 'kerque' and she interpolates French words into Scots such as 'He'd be the most *politik* marriage...' ¹⁵⁰ or 'Maytime, and it's cauld enough to gie me *chair de poule*...' ¹⁵¹ Mary's accent gradually changes as the play progresses, the fact which is instructed in a stage direction, '*We have by now noticed MARY's strange accent - a French woman speaking Scots, not English, with, at the beginning of the play, getting subtly less as it proceeds, quite a French accent*'. ¹⁵² This acquisition of stronger Scots language or accent, according to Ian Brown in a conversation with the author of this study, ¹⁵³ is frequently represented in Scottish literature as the sign of greater sincerity, a locus classicus of its being the two languages, Scots and English of Chris Guthrie in Lewis

Grassie Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*. Similarly, Randall Stevenson (1996) quotes Hugh MacDiarmid's belief that '[t]he return to Scots is a return to meaning and sincerity' ¹⁵⁴

Interestingly, as indicated by Lindsay Paterson, 'some of the most vigorous Scots in the play comes from John Knox' ¹⁵⁵. Historically, Knox was often mocked for his use of an anglicised Scots accent, the fact which is illustrated by his unconditional devotion to Elizabeth 'as a good Protestant'. ¹⁵⁶ This is another indication by Lochhead that Scottish identity is far from a simple concept, she intentionally attributes the strong Scots accent to Knox in order to show that he may speak the language, but he certainly does not speak for Scotland.

On another level, Knox's struggle against Mary is not only the power-struggle between Catholicism and budding Protestantism, but it is also the struggle between the masculine (symbolic) and feminine (semiotic) principles for a domination. This is, as has already been mentioned, underlined by Knox's rejection of women as sirens and temptresses, and more profoundly by the rejection by Knox's church of the Virgin Mary as the iconic female figurehead. It is furthermore the struggle for domination through language, since Knox's religious fanaticism is opposed to Mary's calm and tolerant reasoning. Mary's inability to prevail is due to two factors. Firstly, her grasp of Scots is limited due to the fact that she has been brought up in France. Secondly, by means of linguistic alienation, Lochhead wishes to show the confused state of Mary's national identity on the one hand, and her inability, as a woman-king, to seize and sustain any legislative and clerical power in the predominantly patriarchal society on the other.

The final scene of Mary's execution may be seen as the criticism of the cultural imperatives of the patriarchal society which takes away from women any real power in public sphere. These imperatives also ignore women's stories, render them uninteresting and unimportant to be included in popular history, and marking merely those contributions of famous women which can be either given negative properties or demonised.

Notes.

Chapter Three - Monsters and Shadows: Female Desire and Female Creativity in Three Plays by Liz Lochhead

- ¹ Alison Smith, 'Speaking in Her Own Voice' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (eds.) Robert Crawford and Anne Varty (Edinburgh: EUP, 1993), p. 5.
- ² Anne Varty, 'Scripts and Performances' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (eds.) Robert Crawford and Anne Varty (Edinburgh: EUP, 1993), p. 149.
- ³ Interview with Liz Lochhead, Glasgow, 13 January 1997, p. 1.
- ⁴ Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie, 'New Twists to Old Stories' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 136.
- ⁵ Dialogic/monologic and heteroglossic/homoglossic binary oppositions are Bakhtin's terms as adopted by Robert Crawford in 'Two-faced Language' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, pp. 67-8. In Bakhtin's terms dialogic is susceptible of interruption, contradiction and reinterpretation as opposed to monologic which has a fixed, uninteruptable meaning. By the same token, heteroglossic means composed of a variety of different languages and registers - Crawford mentions demotic and literary or Scots and English - as opposed to homoglossic which consists of a single language or register.
- ⁶ Robert Crawford, 'Two-faced Lanugage' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 67.
- ⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (trans.) James Strachey and Anna Freud, vol. 17 (1919), p. 245.
- ⁸ S. J. Boyd, 'The Voice of Revelation' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 48.
- ⁹ Idem.
- ¹⁰ Interview with Liz Lochhead in *Sleeping with Monsters: Conversations with Scottish and Irish Women Poets* (ed.) Gilleen Somerville-Arjat and Rebecca E. Wilson (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), p. 14.
- ¹¹ Liz Lochhead's letter to Emma Tennant, 28 January 1980, held in the National Library of Scotland, Manuscripts, Acc. No. 9870, as quoted from Anne Varty, 'Scripts and Performances' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 149.
- ¹² 'The Grimm Sisters' in *Dreaming Frankenstein and Collected Poems* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1984), p. 86.
- ¹³ 'Song of Solomon', in *The Holy Bible* (London: Coldstream, 1947).
- ¹⁴ 'The Grimm Sisters' in *Dreaming Frankenstein and Collected Poems* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1984), p. 86.
- ¹⁵ S. J. Boyd, 'The Voice of Revelation' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 47.
- ¹⁶ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice* (Edinburgh: The Salamander Press, 1982), p. 29.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 5.
- ¹⁸ Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie, 'New Twists to Old Stories' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 132.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 34.
- ²⁰ S. J. Boyd, 'The Voice of Revelation' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 47.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 51.
- ²² Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie, 'New Twists to Old Stories' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 136.
- ²³ Jacques Lacan is the controversial French analyst of the 1970's who 'claim[ed] to [have] preserve[ed] the true revolutionary and subversive Freud against conservative adaptations by American and English psychoanalysis' (in Greene and Kahn, 1985, p. 125). Lacanian psychoanalysis, 'extending Freud's exposure of the unconscious conflicts at work in any supposedly sovereign subject, intersects with certain deconstructive insights in its theory of the gendered speaking subject. For Lacan (...) the unified human subject is always a myth. A child's sense of himself, first at the infantile mirror-stage, when as an ill-coordinated bundle of drives and wayward motor skills, s/he invents a self based on her/his reflection in an actual mirror or in the mirror of others' eyes, and again at the point of language acquisition (the entry into the symbolic order), which provides a unifying verbal term for what is still in fact an internally split and shifting speaker. One says 'I' as language allows or forces first-person singular and the rules of syntax.

But this 'I' position is not equally accessible to boys and to girls. Lacan defines language, the symbolic order, as the world of public discourses, which the child enters only as a result of culturally enforced separation from her/his mother and his - but not her - identification with the Father, the male in-family representative of culture. Thus Lacanian theory reserves the 'I' position for men. Women, because they lack the phallus, the positive symbol of gender, self-possession and worldly authority around which language is organized, occupy a negative position in language. (...) Following Freud's definition of all sexual desire as masculine (that is, active), Lacan also argues that woman can enter into the symbolic life of the unconscious only to the extent that she internalizes male desire (phallic libido) - that is, to the extent that she imagines herself as men imagine her. In a psycholinguistic world structured by father-son resemblance and rivalry and by the primacy of masculine logic, woman is a gap or a silence, the invisible and unheard sex.' (In Greene and Kahn, 1985, pp. 82-3)

- ²⁴ Jacques Lacan in Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practise* (London, NY: Methuen Books, 1980), p. 85.
- ²⁵ Idem.
- ²⁶ Anne Varty, 'Scripts and Performances' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, p. 153.
- ²⁷ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 21.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 20.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 14.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 19.
- ³¹ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 9.
- ³² Idem.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 8.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 12.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 8.
- ³⁶ Idem.
- ³⁷ Idem.
- ³⁸ Idem.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 8.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 15.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 31.
- ⁴² An interview given to the author of this study in Glasgow, 13 January 1997.
- ⁴³ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 18.
- ⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing* (London: The Women's Press Limited, 1979), p. 97.
- ⁴⁵ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 30.
- ⁴⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing*, p. 101.
- ⁴⁷ Idem.
- ⁴⁸ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 6.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 16.
- ⁵⁰ Idem.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 18.
- ⁵² Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing*, p. 100.
- ⁵³ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 25.
- ⁵⁴ Idem.
- ⁵⁵ S. J. Boyd, 'The Voice of Revelation: Liz Lochhead and Monsters' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (eds.) Robert Crawford and Anne Varty (Edinburgh: EUP, 1993), p. 98.
- ⁵⁶ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 30.
- ⁵⁷ Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie, p. 94.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 88.
- ⁵⁹ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 12.
- ⁶⁰ Idem.
- ⁶¹ Ibid. p. 11.
- ⁶² McDonald and Harvie, p. 133.
- ⁶³ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 16.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 17.
- ⁶⁵ Liz Lochhead, *Dracula in Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off and Dracula* (London: Penguin Books, 1989).
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 16.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

- ⁶⁸ Idem.
- ⁶⁹ McDonald and Harvie, p. 130.
- ⁷⁰ Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrave, *The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1978), p. 266.
- ⁷¹ Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 24.
- ⁷² McDonald and Harvie, p. 136.
- ⁷³ Ibid., p. 134.
- ⁷⁴ Liz Lochhead, *Dracula*, p. 91.
- ⁷⁵ Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice*, p. 31.
- ⁷⁶ Liz Lochhead, *Dracula*, p. 73.
- ⁷⁷ Idem.
- ⁷⁸ Idem.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 79.
- ⁸⁰ Idem.
- ⁸¹ Idem.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 81.
- ⁸³ Idem.
- ⁸⁴ McDonald and Harvie, p. 134.
- ⁸⁵ Liz Lochhead, 'Lucy's Diary', p. 62.
- ⁸⁶ Idem.
- ⁸⁷ Idem.
- ⁸⁸ Idem.
- ⁸⁹ Liz Lochhead, *Dracula*, p. 91.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 85.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., p. 81.
- ⁹² Idem.
- ⁹³ Idem.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 114.
- ⁹⁵ Idem.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 109.
- ⁹⁷ Stan Gooch, *Total Man*, p. 238, quoted in Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrave, *The Wise Wound*, p. 273.
- ⁹⁸ Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 387.
- ⁹⁹ Quoted in Frayling, *Vampyres*, p. 387.
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- ¹⁰¹ Liz Lochhead, *Dracula*, pp. 104-5.
- ¹⁰² Shuttle and Redgrave, p. 254.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 246.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lavater in Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 387.
- ¹⁰⁵ Crawford and Varty, p. 133.
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- ¹¹⁰ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, p. 204.
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- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 106-7.
- ¹¹⁶ Lochhead in Alison Smith, 'Speaking in her Own Voice' in Liz Lochhead's *Voices* (eds.) Robert Crawford and Anne Varty (Edinburgh: EUP, 1993), p. 10.
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- ¹¹⁹ Interview with Liz Lochhead, p. 5.

- ¹²⁰ Liz Lochhead, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off and Dracula* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 23.
- ¹²¹ Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie 'Putting New Twists to Old Stories: Feminism and Lochhead's Drama' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (ed.) Robert Crawford and Anne Varty (Edinburgh: EUP, 1993), p. 134.
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- ¹³⁰ Interview with Liz Lochhead, p. 4.
- ¹³¹ Idem.
- ¹³² Liz Lochhead, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, p. 12.
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- ¹⁵³ A conversation with Ian Brown, 9 March 1999.
- ¹⁵⁴ Randall Stevenson, 'Introduction: Snakes and Ladders, Snakes and Owls: Charting Scottish Theatre' in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (ed.) Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 8.
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Chapter Four

Scold's Bridles and Broken Myths: Reinterpretation of Gender Roles and Language (Mis)communication in Three Plays by Marcella

Evaristi

4.1. *About the playwright*

Marcella Silvia Evaristi was born in a Scottish-Italian Catholic family in Glasgow on 19 July 1953. She was educated at Notre Dame High School and the University of Glasgow. Similar to Liz Lochhead, with whom she collaboratively wrote reviews and performed in the early 1970s, Evaristi began to write poetry while she was still a student at the University of Glasgow, and in 1973 she won a BBC Student Verse Competition.

Her aspirations to become a performer as well as to pursue her studies in feminism and literature led her to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, and later to voluntary work for the Open Space Theatre in Tottenham Court Road. After having transferred her Ph.D. on women in theatre at the turn of the century to Edinburgh University, she became increasingly actively involved in drama and wrote her first full-length play *Dorothy and the Bitch*, premiered in the Demarco Gallery, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1976. The play examines miscomprehension about notions of a woman's neediness and vulnerability, 'those things being considered gender-based, whether they are [so] or not'.¹

Following the success of *Dorothy and the Bitch*, she was awarded an Arts Council scholarship and given the post of a playwright-in-residence at St. Andrews University. At the same time, the Traverse Theatre commissioned her to write *Scotia's Darlings* (1978), which opened at the Celtic Lodge at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and later toured Scotland. This play is still considered by many critics to be her most significant play so far. Since then she has held writer's residencies at the University of St. Andrews (1979-80), the University of Sheffield (1982-4), and the University of Glasgow (1984-5).

Her other work includes the stage plays *Mouthpieces* (1980), *Hard to Get* (Traverse Theatre, 1980; Granada TV, 1983), *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* (Traverse Theatre, 1981), *Eve Set the Balls of Corruption Rolling* (BBC Play for Today and winner of the Pye Award for Best Writer New to TV, 1982), *Commedia* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, transferring to Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, and nominated Evening Standard Award Best Play by Newcomer, 1982), *Checking Out* (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, 1984), a one person play *The Works* (Traverse Theatre, 1984), *Terrestrial Extras* (Tron Theatre, Glasgow, 1985), *The Offski Variations* (Tron Theatre, Glasgow, 1989), as well as adaptations of her plays for radio *Hard to Get*, *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses*, *The Works* (1985), and radio-plays *The Hat* (1988), *The Theory and Practice of Rings* (1992), *Troilus and Cressida and Da-di-da-di-da* (1992). She collaborated in the writing of *Delighting the Heart: A Notebook of Women Writers* (1989), *Plays Without Wires* (1989), and *There's*

Something about Convent School Girls (1991). She is currently working as radio critic for the Glasgow newspaper *The Herald*.

4.2 *About this chapter*

Although her early work has often been labelled as overtly feminist in nature, Evaristi claims that the promotion of feminism 'on top of this sort of pristine thing called art'² was far from what she had in mind. Having begun to write at a time when there were precious few women playwrights on the Scottish scene, she was fascinated with the possibility of being a woman who writes poetry and performs theatre about women and for women. However, she rejects the critique that, being ideologically influenced by feminism, her plays often seem confrontational and one-dimensional. She claims that she has never felt censored by her own ideology, and that any influence that feminist methodologies might have had on her ideas, emotions, and imaginative processes, has enriched rather than restricted her writing:

On the contrary, if I see the political writing as biblical writing I think I'm covering absences which I think good writing does anyway. I think [that] radical writing is truthful writing so that good writing is by its definition radicalism. (...) [This] takes me away from any notion that playwriting about working class tenements is properly political in the way that playwriting about bourgeoisie is not, it takes me away from thinking indeed that male sexuality is any less my concern than female sexuality.³

Evaristi's plays focus on Glasgow's Scottish-Italian world which, in her own opinion, was not covered on the stage at the time when she first began to write. For this reason these plays have always occupied a special position in the output of contemporary

Scottish playwriting. In her writing she is particularly interested to explore the ways in which the women perceive their identities as opposed to the men and the ways in which the language reflects those self-perceptions and intergender power relationships. By exploring different layers of meanings that are attributed to certain words, Evaristi endeavours to show how those meanings are not inherent to the respective words but, instead, have been inscribed onto them by the dominant cultural imperatives. In the same sense she questions the proposition that one's individuality is naturally determined by one's gender, nationality or race, and explores the ways in which one is shaped by the society in which one lives. Also, as a self-proclaimed feminist who works in language, she focuses on the notion of sexism and language. However, it is not only sexism that Evaristi has set herself to battle against, she also uses her art to protest against any prejudice that she may observe in everyday life around her.

Although this chapter aims to concentrate on showing the ways in which Evaristi uses language to explore and reinterpret female identity and gender roles, it has to be pointed out that her notion of female identity is never divorced from the question of national identity. It has been already mentioned that, at the time she began her writing career, Evaristi felt that the issue of identity of Scottish Italians had hardly been touched upon in Scottish literature. It is evident from her plays that her characters' search for identity always works on two levels - a level of gender and a level of national affiliation. Because the two cannot be separated, the issue of national identity will be briefly mentioned, where appropriate, in the course of the analysis.

Evaristi confesses that her writing style has been influenced by the linguistic and cultural richness of her native Glasgow and that it heavily relies on the British vaudevillean tradition. In her view, the vaudevillean tradition is central to high drama in Scotland, as opposed to the English theatre where the same tradition has been restricted to the lower dramatic forms.

So my Dad was a friend of Jimmy Logan, when I started writing I had Francie and Josie and all these people in my head, Stanley Baxter, as well as going every week to the Citizens' Theatre as a stall girl and sitting in the garden with my paperback.⁴

Evaristi does not wish to write plays geared only to a feminist audience, her intention is to make her writing appealing to a larger audience through being both entertaining and thought-provoking, but without being didactic. In her opinion, the 'marriage of (...) the poetic and the dramatic and humorous'⁵ is an ideal combination in playwriting. By using brash physical humour she throws conscious and calculated provocations at her audiences without patronising them. In an interview with the author of this study, she tried to draw one's attention to the distrust of humour in the British theatre, and particularly with the so-called 'non-high-cultural pizzazz of vaudevillean and Glasgow humour'.⁶ This abundant palette of diverse forms of humour can be found in all of her plays, causing her to fear that it could earn her a 'clever clever label'.⁷

The vaudevillean element is particularly evident in her earliest works which consist predominantly of revues, small scenes which have been self-authored or strung together through collaboration with different authors, Liz Lochhead and Fiona Shaw among others. By 1980 she had moved away from this sort of theatrical production

and concentrated on the writing of full-length stage plays, such as *Dorothy and the Bitch* and *Scotia's Darlings*. The influence of variety shows and revues will continue to be visible in the structure of her plays. She has also made occasional incursions into writing revues, such as *Mouthpieces*, alongside her other work which includes a number of radio plays, film scripts and short stories.

This chapter endeavours to analyse Evaristi's preoccupation with the expression of female identity through language and the reinterpretation of gender roles on the basis of examples drawn from three of her early plays: *Mouthpieces* (1980), *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* (1981) and *Commedia* (1982).

4.3. *Mouthpieces* (1980)

A series of individual scenes based on different everyday situations, with a humorous twist, concentrating on the interactions between a number of characters of different gender, class and national backgrounds.

Mouthpieces is a full-length play written in the form of a revue, based on improvisations and in collaboration with the actors, in which Evaristi sets out to explore the ways in which language is used to identify a woman's position in contemporary society and the different ways in which men and women perceive their identities and sexuality. She furthermore sets out to examine the interaction between language and power relationships, particularly with regard to female identity. In order to express those concerns, Evaristi creates a series of scenes which zigzag between sparky dialogues, self-revealing confessions delivered in prose and variety-style songs.

The characters are performed by six actors of both genders, and Evaristi balances English and Scottish voices to show how one's position in a society, and one's very gender, have been constructed by the dominant cultural imperatives. Also, in the previous two chapters the feminine principle has been discussed as the Other, confined to the domestic sphere, and in direct opposition to the centrality of the masculine principle, which belongs to the public sphere. Evaristi destabilises the characters' roles in the societal and linguistic hierarchy with the purpose of redefining traditional perceptions of both gender and national affiliations. The piece concentrates on language as an end rather than the means of telling a story, and it reaches its inner cohesion not through logically linked action but rather through the audience's recognition of multiple experiences which comprise our individual and communal identities. The play's title reflects this point, for it derives from Evaristi's belief that language is a mouthpiece of identity, or, as Deborah Cameron has asserted in her book *Verbal Hygiene* (1995), 'language is inextricably connected with identity, both individual and social - it is something that contributes to people's sense of who they are, and convey messages about who they are to others'.⁸ There is another possible interpretation of the title which was not necessarily recognised by the author when she first decided upon it. A number of authors describe a mouthpiece as a sixteenth century torture device used to punish women who were accused of gossiping, quarrelling and flyting. Elspeth King writes in her book *The Scottish Women Suffrage Movement* (1978) that such women were chained in public with metal branks on their heads. Each brank had a mouthpiece which fitted in a woman's mouth keeping it open and preventing speech. In this way a mouthpiece became a device which silenced women's voices, in the same way that the language in the play has

become a hindrance to the expression of the characters' true identities. So far in this study, language has been described as a device by which male-dominated society oppresses women. Far from refuting this point, Evaristi expands it to show how the cultural imperatives of the patriarchal ideology pressurise not only women but men as well. In their final speech Adam and Douglas refer to the double nature of language, as the means to and an obstacle to expressing one's thoughts and emotions.

ADAM & DOUGLAS. (...) So open your mouth and see
 All the creatures words can be
 Magical beasts with sharp stings
 They will bite or caress
 With each no and yes
 You'll be cursed you'll be blessed
 In the test of words.
 Words... they've cheated me
 They've cunningly defeated me.
 They quarrelled with my quietness and
 won
 But words can speak so sweetly
 I surrender to them meekly
 Remembering silence
 Brought not much fun. (p. 25) ⁹

In her article 'Pickle Fights: Gendered Talk in Preschool Disputes' (1993), Amy Sheldon proposes that language, being a major tool of human communication, serves as 'a part of culture and an instrument for transmitting and perpetuating implicit, historically situated and culture-bound principles of social order and systems of belief that define and assign unequal social value to femininity and masculinity'. ¹⁰ She also posits that one of language's functions is to 'perpetuate and enforce asymmetrical gendered behaviour by means of reconstructing social relations between and among females and males in countless ordinary daily conversations (...)'. ¹¹ If one accepts that gendered behaviour has been established and indeed perpetuated through the

reconstruction of social relations between men and women, the obvious conclusion is that language and gender differences are social constructs which place men in the central position as opposed to women. However, Evaristi disputes that by rendering the male characters in the play as equally powerless as the female characters. Adam and Douglas are at the mercy of the language that they use; they describe words as 'magical beasts with sharp stings' ¹² which can 'cheat' and 'defeat' those who use them. In showing man's language from men's perspective as being equally elusive as when used by women, Evaristi subverts the concept of separate spheres from the beginning and sets out to readdress the gender roles that are at play.

As a feminist with an acute interest in language, Evaristi is primarily interested to examine whether or not it is possible for men and women to use language in order to establish relationships and their respective positions in those relationships, and if yes, how. For her, language is the tool for a constant power struggle for position in the communicational hierarchy between individuals of both genders. Due to this constant struggle, the meanings of words can be lost or distorted to such an extent that this may often cause misunderstandings and even breakdown in communication, and, ultimately, in human relationships. Evaristi explores this by either placing her characters in unusual everyday situations which are carefully balanced between being serious and humorous (and sometimes even quirky), or mocking well-known literary models. An example of the former is the phone conversation between the two unlikely Samaritans:

(Enter DOUGLAS and ADAM with telephone receivers.)

DOUGLAS. I'm here to help you. Just talk, feel free to talk. Just say what you like. Talk about all the things you've been bottling up inside. Things you've never dared or wanted to tell anyone. It's anonymous you see. Feel free.

ADAM There. You see? It's not hopeless. The fact that you want to help me and hear from me, a total stranger, means that things aren't as black as you supposed.

DOUGLAS. Of course they're not. (*Pause.*) Hello? Don't go away, will you?

ADAM. Of course I won't go away. We'll talk as long as you want to.

DOUGLAS. As long as you want to.

ADAM. Yes.

DOUGLAS. What's the matter. You're facing some crisis, yes?

ADAM. That's absolutely right. Everyone has problems, we all face crises, believe me. You're not alone.

DOUGLAS. You're not alone either.

ADAM. That's right.

DOUGLAS. Yes.

ADAM. Now. I think I detect a slight Scottish accent there. Perhaps the problem has something to do with being so far from home? Mm?

DOUGLAS. You know that's funny. I've lived in Ealing for... well it must be ten years now... I thought the accent had disappeared almost completely. Except when I get angry or drunk.

ADAM. Ah. I see. You know there's nothing to be ashamed of. To think that alcoholism is a sign of moral weakness is a common misconception. It's a curable illness. I can give you an address. And you mustn't feel because you are... one that you're going to lose the love and respect of your fellow men.

DOUGLAS. You're right. There's nothing wrong with loving men at all. But I suspect that while you might have accepted this intellectually, perhaps emotionally or subconsciously you can't accept yourself. You feel dirty. You hang around public toilets. You take sly looks at denim buttocks.

ADAM. When you say 'you' do you mean 'one' and therefore you.

DOUGLAS. Yes, that's right. You.

ADAM. You.

DOUGLAS. Yes. Right. What was I saying? Ah yes. We live in an intolerant world you know. No greys. All black and white.

ADAM. Ah I see. You mustn't dismiss us all as white racist trash you know. Would you like to talk about your experiences of colour prejudice in England?

DOUGLAS. Why do you say England? Why don't you say Britain? You only say Britain on the news when an English team wins the cup. Let me tell you something. I hate Ealing. It stinks. I weep at Hogmanay.

ADAM. So your alcoholism stems from home sickness after all. Talk to me. I'm your friend.

DOUGLAS. (*More Scottish.*) Raving fucking queen! You
 picked the wrong bloody Samaritan this time you bloody English
 wanker!

ADAM. What did you say?

DOUGLAS. I said BLOODY ENGLISH WANKER!

ADAM. No, before that.

DOUGLAS. Raving fucking queen?

ADAM. No, after that.

DOUGLAS. I said I was a Samaritan, cloth ears.

ADAM. That's funny, Jock. So am I. (pp. 6-7)

In this scene, the misunderstanding is helped by the fact that the two speakers cannot see each other. Evaristi thus places a certain degree of importance on the visual side of the communication, and in particular on the body language. The humour arises from the fact that while Douglas and Adam can only hear each other's voices, the audience can see both of them and react to both the words and their reactions to the words that are thrown at them. Another idea that Evaristi sets forth in this example is that there is a conflict in the language based on the inability of the speakers to achieve complete control over it. In the above example, what begins as an innocent phone conversation soon turns into an avalanche of verbal abuse based on the prejudices about one's nationality, alcohol abuse and sexuality. The communication based on language is shown as dual - the speakers are both subjects and objects of such communication, and the conveyed messages are used, in Deborah Cameron's terms, 'to construct (not just reflect) different kinds of social relationships. Hearers are expected to understand the rules of the game'.¹³ Evaristi confuses those messages to the extent that even though the speakers have applied the rules of the game, the results ultimately baffle them. It is clear to the audience who are able to both see and hear the actors impersonating Douglas and Adam that neither is the former character a black alcoholic, nor is the latter character gay. However, since the visual element is taken

away from the characters, they make judgements based on the way they speak, while feeding on the prejudices that have been taught to them in the course of their societal upbringing. The above example can therefore be used to show how language, in itself neutral, may assume different meanings under the influence of non-linguistic factors such as nationality, class and gender. Deborah Cameron emphasises that language and gender are 'inextricably linked', ¹⁴ 'as children, we become language users and, through using language, become gender members of the community: both language and gender are developed through our participation in everyday social practice'. ¹⁵

However, while the other authors in this study have been discussed with regard to the different positions which women and men hold in the interaction process, Evaristi goes on to show how speakers of both genders are equally powerless in the process of linguistic interaction. In the beginning of their conversation Adam and Douglas use rapport talk, usually associated with the women's language modes; that is, they are sympathetic and encouraging towards one another. Gradually, the balance of the rapport talk mode is disrupted. It breaks down and gives place to a more competitive speech mode, thus Adam becomes increasingly patronising, while Douglas resorts to verbal violence. The balance is then reinstated through Adam's choice not to accept Douglas's aggressiveness but rather to subvert it through questioning it. By emphasising the communicational misunderstanding which is at the core of the disruption of communicational balance in this scene, Evaristi questions the possibility of the language to enable the participants of intergender and intragender (as in this case) communication to interact as equals, or even to understand each other.

An example of Evaristi's use of well-known literary models in order to explore language as a power struggle for the place in the communicational hierarchy is the scene in which Evaristi sends up Shaw's *Pygmalion* by creating a character called Higgles, a caricature of Shaw's Professor Higgins. The idea of *Pygmalion* fascinates Evaristi for obvious reasons. In Shaw's play, an upper class language expert is intent on changing his subject's social position through improving her language use. Language has become the means of separation between the different social classes; how one speaks determines who one is. In his introductory speech, Higgles brags that he can establish exactly where one comes from on the basis of the way they speak, and that he can help one climb up the social ladder by teaching them how to speak *properly*:

HIGGLES. Hello. I can place an accent to the nearest street. I'd like to establish that from the start. To clarify things. Let me introduce myself. My name is Higgles. Master of the standards of English. The voice beautiful. Did I say the nearest street? Listen mate... (*Freezes.*) Who said that? Who said 'mate'? What joker is throwing his voice? Listen, did I say the nearest street? I can place an accent to the nearest door, to the nearest veritable close. Whatever a 'close' is.

When I was eighteen I locked myself in the loo... shit, that's dated... Bugger... the bog, no that's vulgar... I locked myself in the lav... God, that's American... I know the lav and have never looked back. Because Ladies and Gentlemen, that day in the lav I swore to myself... ah the wonderful resonance of tiles... Yes, I promised myself that my destiny would not be wrecked by my regional emissions. Yes, I promised myself that the voice of my youth was a thing of the past. Later we'll get onto Vocabulary. I'll bash the dollies and the serviettes and the settees and the cardies and the pinkies and the Babychams out of you. Whatever they are. But that's Advanced. Truly, what I did for myself that day in the lav, I can do for you. Money back if disappointed. Reduced rates for women. Trust me. Don't be put off by my suave manner. Trust me. Don't feel diminished. I should hate that. I have foibles. I do bad-tempered things with carpet slippers, Mrs Pearse and impressionable tarts. There. You're like babies. You're getting younger as I look at you. Relax. (pp. 3-4)

It is obvious from Higgles's speech that when he refers to 'a proper language', he speaks about an upper-class English, and moreover the upper-class English seen from the male perspective. Evaristi shows language as a mask behind which the character hides his true nature. It is an artificially created voice whose function is to hide 'the voice of [the character's] youth'.¹⁶ Higgles further claims that the voice of his youth is 'a thing of the past'.¹⁷ At first glance this statement seems quite superficial. The voice of his youth that Higgles talks about might be, according to him, a socially inferior accent which he endeavours to rectify in order to maintain the image of himself as a socially superior being. However, the statement's deeper meaning is revealed if one focuses on Higgles's further rejection of certain kind of vocabulary. He threatens to bash 'the dollies and the serviettes and the settees and the cardies and the pinkies and the Babychams'¹⁸ out of his listeners cum spectators cum potential students. His rejection of those words is clearly stated in the sentence 'Whatever they are.'¹⁹ In opposition to this inappropriate vocabulary he mentions the 'advanced' vocabulary which can be learnt and offers his tutoring services. The rejected vocabulary clearly belongs to the domestic sphere; it is the vocabulary which is often referred to as 'female' in nature. The rejection of this vocabulary represents, in Lacan's terms, the abandoning of the semiotic phase in language acquisition, which is epitomised in one's rejection of one's mother's language, and the entrance into the symbolic phase, which is epitomised in one's acceptance of one's father's language. Higgles calls this so-called father's language 'advanced', superior to the so-called mother's language. It can be learnt, and it is not a coincidence that Higgles, who offers to teach it, happens to be a man. Jennifer Coates stipulates in *Women, Men and Language* (1993) that if

a woman wishes to '[operate] successfully in the men's world [she must become], to all intents and purposes, a man'.²⁰ Higgles also promises that he will refund the money if he fails to teach the potential students, and particularly emphasises that there are 'reduced rates for women'.²¹ Women are expected to fail to master this 'advanced' vocabulary because for them it is an alien language whose meanings they have to decode.

Higgles mocks Betty for speaking with a working class Scottish accent:

HIGGLES. You're scum, you'll never be better than you are, you're scruff, whatever that is, the gutter's not good enough, you want thick boots to kick you and fat lips to kiss you with, you'd squirm with proletarian pleasure, wouldn't you? You're debased, I should simply face it. The Queen's English coming out of your blousy mouth would be like leeches making silk.²²

Betty is female Scottish working-class, and for this reason she is marginalised in the society where a male English middle-to-upper-class-aspirant is a norm. Her ability to learn the male language is mocked both in Higgles's speech, 'the Queen's English coming out of [her] blousy mouth would be like leeches making silk',²³ and in her own voice:

(SIOBHAN. BETTY'S SONG). I know that people inside are
just folk
And ways of speaking have
always been jokes
But was it conspiracy hoax or
bad luck

That when they're merely
 crestfallen
 I'm really fucked.
 It's strange wherever I put my
 stress
 Can say much more than just
 my address
 I've checked my equipment
 And my lungs are fit
 But when they're being sibilant
 I get the spit.
 It's not just the sounds
 But it's not just the words
 The two kind of go hand in
 hand
 So show me your landscape
 Just open your mouth
 And I'll show you the lie
 Of your land
 Yes I'll show you the lies of the
 land. (p. 19)

Words and accents go hand in hand in the process of marginalisation of the feminine principle from the public sphere, which is a man's sphere, and placing it low in the communicational hierarchy where a woman speaks in language which is different and other than the norm. Language is seen as the means of silencing a woman's voice, and because Evaristi closely relates gender and national identity, it also becomes the means of silencing a Scottish voice. To further highlight this point, Evaristi introduces different accents in the scenes throughout the play, from the camped-up Oxford English to the guttural west coast Scottish. The different accents become the tools for expressing Evaristi's views on habitual misconceptions about gender and national identity. They also endeavour to show that one's identity cannot be determined by one's accent, because the accent and vocabulary that one uses are going to depend on the dominant cultural imperatives of the community in which one has been brought up, and a gender role that one has been given within that community.

Alongside the accents Evaristi experiments with the engendering of the words' meanings in the sketch about colours. The two characters symbolically called Pink and Lemon are wheeled on the stage in the respective buggies, playing the toddlers. The discussion that follows is a good example of Amy Sheldon's view that language serves as an instrument of the perpetuation of the principles of social order and systems of belief that define gender differences.

PINK. Hey, I'm sorry. Lemon? Och tell me. Honest, I'll shut up. Come on. Whit's the problem?

LEMON. Well, you see, I'd got used tae the blue. I mean, of course white sometimes, on the odd Sunday, memories of christening, but mostly blue.

PINK. I thought bein a blue baby was fatal.

LEMON. It's not bein blue that's fatal. I mean I haven't worked it out properly, I mean I'm not quite sure whit it's aboot, but the blues and pinks mean something. They do.

PINK. They mother carin do!

LEMON. Hey, do you know aboot it? Can ye tell me?

PINK. A don't know. I think that was female intuition. It wisnae very pleasant either. Go oon.

LEMON. Well, ma mammy's a good mammy, no?

PINK. Don't get distracted were all of us in love.

LEMON. Right. Well she's always dressed me in blue. So ow always known whit tae expect. You know?

PINK. Aye. No.

LEMON. Well--- do you mind if I talk it through--- I think it would help. Yir outside the Co-op and there's a line of yes. Ye can only focus so far and yir Mammy's dumped the Sugar Puffs of yir legs and yiv goat a choice. Ye can try tae focus on the Honey Monster

PINK. --- Mother-carin big---

LEMON. Or ye can lie back and surrender yirself tae passin drools and pokes. And when yir a bloke---

PINK. Whit?

LEMON. I mean when yir blue (and not white or lemon and therefore indeterminate) all that's great. "Nice big boy, big man, strong wee fella, tickle tackle, there whit a clever little man", poke tickle finger tae clutch. It's magic. But it depends on yir pastel. Only blue seems to do the trick tae make it magic.

*(Then as before... Gap in available script... Finishing as before on Val's line: "The answer's a lemon--- when yir pink")
(They are wheeled off (...)) (pp. 5-6)*

In this sketch Evaristi shows how the notion that gender roles have been imposed upon individuals from a very early age coincides with Cameron's and Coates' views that the socialisation process during which individuals assume certain gender roles starts in infancy. Since it is difficult to at first glance determine the sex in the small babies, the two colours, pink and blue, have been assigned the opposing genderised connotations, and have therefore become the representations of one's identity. The colour blue, which signifies the masculine principle, assumes the positive attributes, while the colour pink, which signifies the feminine principle, is given the negative attributes. Evaristi introduces another two colours, lemon and white, which are neutral, and ironically comments that 'the answer's a lemon... when [one is] pink'.²⁴ In other words, the only way the feminine principle can avoid marginalisation is to lose the female (negative) attributes and enter the masculine principle. Another stereotype is introduced in this scene: the stereotype of a woman seen exclusively as a mother, characterised purely by her biological function in the societal hierarchy. Motherhood is represented as a caring, giving function, however, the image of a mother comes to be seen as derogative, of less importance. This derogation is further emphasised by using the term 'mother' and 'care' in curses, as in 'they mother carin do' and 'mother-carin big'.

Evaristi further refers to the 'masculinisation' of the feminine principle with regard to the genderisation of the characters' names. The name-game is another sketch in which she draws her audiences'/readers' attention to the concept of a double standard which

is still very much at work by showing the different ways in which men and women perceive themselves. The character called Martha complains that all of her problems derive from her being given such a plain old-fashioned name, and wishes that she was called otherwise:

MARTHA. Seems to me some names are fucking wall-flowered
 From the fucking start.
 Which does seem unfair since we all start off
 With our own personal anonymous hearts.
 I mean they're not stamped at birth.
 Are they?
 Was the bleedin priest wasn't it?
 He could've said 'I now baptize thee Alexis.'
 Now there's a name.
 So bleeding cool that name
 It's hardly bleedin female. (pp. 9-10)

Language has been constructed by male-dominated society for the purpose of its self-perpetuation. This purpose, therefore, will be inscribed into the meanings of the words. According to Dale Spender, since female experience has largely been named by men, '[t]he female version has been blanketed and made invisible or negative. This is one of the sources, and one of the manifestations of woman's identity as 'other'.²⁵ There is a sense of self-demeaning passivity in Martha's perception of herself, and particularly in her wish to defeminise her name. Her imaginary mirror-image, Alex, can do everything that Martha cannot, because she owns the non-feminine qualities. As Val has stated in the colours sketch, 'the answer is lemon if you are pink'. Women's language is powerless and since it is an expression of women's identity, then this identity will be powerless as well. Again, in order to become equal to men, women must renounce their femininity and accept the interpretation of language from the male perspective. In doing so, they also renounce their sexuality, therefore,

women's identity might be defined as defeminate and desexualised. Men, on the other hand, perceive themselves as complete sexual beings who are empowered by language because, according to Spender, 'they have formulated a semantic rule which posits themselves as central and positive, as the norm'.²⁶ Spender further claims that the asymmetry between male and female self-perception has been shaped by male-dominated society 'to ensure that no matter what females do it is negative, and no matter what males do, it is positive'.²⁷ As an example, she refers to attitudes towards male and female sexualities, where extensive sexual activity on the part of a woman is perceived negatively as unacceptable, even nymphomaniac, whereas the extensive sexual activity on the part of a man is perceived positively as virile and potent. Based on this, the male self-perception is described as that of machismo and aggressive domination:

STEVEN. Boy, oh boy, I enjoy being Johnny!
 Johnny's fancy free sounding, kiss stealing
 Free wheeling from the hot seat of my
 Spitfire. (p. 11)

Johnny and Spitfire are here synonyms for the phallus, and as such they signify male virility. Johnny is portrayed as 'kiss stealing', 'free wheeling' and charmingly lewd, which corresponds with aggressive male self-perception. However, Evaristi shows that this aggressive self-perception is based on self-deceit and self-doubt. Behind it hides another quite different person who calls himself Cecil:

STEVEN. Cecil. Cecil. Cecil.
 Even de Mille couldn't kill off the Cecil Effect.
 Cecil haunts me.
 Cecil's a loser with bad breath--- he steals my
 cachais.

Cecil hates me. He's crouched in that capital
letter.
And he's dying to get the better of me.
Cecil's four inches smaller than me
When I don't wear Johnny's heels. (p. 11)

Evaristi gradually deconstructs the concept of male domination through language by destabilising the meanings that the words have been given, subverting them or superimposing other meanings on them. It is not only the words that she works with, she also genderises the sounds. In this case she assigns the male properties to the names Alex and Johnny, and the female properties to the names Martha and Cecil. She destabilises this even further by hypothesising that one's name, very much like one's gender role, is a social construct and is not inherent to that person.

MARTHA. (...) we all start off
With our own personal anonymous hearts.
I mean they're not stamped at birth.
Are they? (p. 9)

She continues to accuse the priest for an unfortunate choice of her name, 'Was the bleedin priest, wasn't it/He could've said: I baptize thee Alexis (...)'²⁸ Here she, of course, refers to the custom in the Catholic Church to assign biblical names to the children. The name Martha is mentioned in 'The Gospel According to S. John' (11: 1-30).²⁹ The biblical Martha was sister of Lazarus and Mary ('that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair')³⁰, whose pledge of faith after her brother's death impelled Jesus to resurrect Lazarus: 'if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died/But I know, that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee'.³¹ It is the same Martha whose complaining about having to serve him on her own whilst her sister Mary sat by his feet and listened to his words

prompted Jesus to reprehend her as 'careful and troubled about many things'.³² The name Martha thus comes to signify a self-effacing, caring and faithful person, an image of the eternal feminine painted by the patriarchal ideology. Evaristi's Martha opposes this image, and her lashing out against 'the bleeding priest' is a revolt against oppressive societal agents, the Church being one of them, which condition one's societal role, one's very identity, according to the needs of the dominant cultural imperatives. Her questioning whether or not one's own 'personal hearts (...) [are] stamped at birth'³³ goes back to those sociolinguist theories which see the socialisation of an individual as a gradual process imposed by societal forces from early infancy.

Having destabilised the model of the eternal feminine based on women's biological role as mothers, namely the silent, self-defacing and caring women, Evaristi further sets out to eliminate the notion that women are by nature passive, tend to 'suppress conflict'³⁴ and follow social norms, as opposed to men who openly express conflict in the form of a verbal or a physical contest. In the so-called schoolboy sketch, which could be appropriately subtitled the willies' game, she shows two schoolboys who are forced into a verbal duel out of fear that they might reveal their cowardice:

ADAM. I'm warning you Sweeney! Don't be deceived by my civilised fair-playing. I'm a black belt. In fact I've got three as a matter of fact. And and and Harry Botheringham's taught me karate. Harry says I've got to watch when I play with my gerbil because I don't know my own strength so you'd better be jolly careful.

DOUGLAS. Is that all? Huh. I'm a crack shot. Clay pigeons weep at the sight of me. And I can play Hari Kari with the best of them. (*Softly.*) Oh bother, what did I say that for?

ADAM. Weapons, eh? You want to talk weapons eh? Fine. Far as I'm concerned that's AOK super.

DOUGLAS. Fine.

- ADAM. (*Softly.*) What'll I say now? I know. You moved again!
- DOUGLAS. No I didn't when?
- ADAM. There just now.
- DOUGLAS. Every time I shift my weight of anything you say that and I haven't I just got a bit of cramp and I think it's pretty mean the way you do that Cummings!
- ADAM. Well, if you're apologising Sweeney. If you're publicly stepping down...
- DOUGLAS. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not, I did it on purpose and what's more there's more where that came from. (*Moves.*) Oh God.
- ADAM. Oh Lord I'd better move now. I've taken a much bigger step than you and listen the way I defend myself you won't crawl out alive. I'll self-protect-myself-you into smithereens.
- DOUGLAS. Don't be so cocky Cummings. Remember the Junior toilets after Whitsun.
- ADAM. Well, you remember the back lane in the Christmas term.
- DOUGLAS. No?
- ADAM. Oh. Well remember the Changing rooms a week last Friday.
- DOUGLAS. Yes, that was great fun wasn't it? Oh God no that was Forshall a week last Wednesday. I warn you don't come any closer. Remember you started it.
- ADAM. You started it, Sweeney. But I'll finish it. Gosh, that was quite good. Do you hear me Sweeney, you started it and I'll finish it.
- DOUGLAS. I wish I had my specs on. I think he's got a catapult in his hand.
- ADAM. (*Attempting V sign.*) Can't remember which is rude and which is Churchillian.
- DOUGLAS. Tis. It's a catapult. You've no idea how many knuckledusters I've got on!
- ADAM. He jolly well means it. Come and show me! What did I say that for? Come on then!
- DOUGLAS. He means it. Just watch me! Maybe he'll change his mind. Where are my glasses?
- ADAM. Good Lord he must have a knife or something frightful! Where's my compass?
- DOUGLAS. Good Lord, he must have a knife.
- ADAM. You know what this means, Sweeney? You do, don't you?
- DOUGLAS. Yes. No, what?
- ADAM. This is war, Sweeney.
- (*Exeunt.*) (pp. 15-6)

The scene reminds one of a comic squabble between two inept academics, or two sleazy politicians struggling for political power. On the surface, the comic relief is carried by the characters' misuse of language. They mispronounce words, such as 'hari kari', and any attempt on their part to use educated Oxford English is camped-up for the purpose of comic relief, like constant use of phrases like 'Good Lord' or 'Gosh', which fades away as their debate heats up. Failure of their attempts to establish dominance over each other is continually revealed in their asides, such as 'Oh bother, what did I say that for?' or 'He means it. (...) Maybe he'll change his mind.'. ³⁵ Faced with a threat of actual physical violence, their cowardice shows under the mask of cockiness and Adam's concluding statement, 'This is war, Sweeney' sounds shallow, especially because the spectators/readers are aware that it will not be followed by any action. Adam and Douglas flirt with the idea of an open physical conflict but they never act upon it. In this manner, according to Deborah Tannen in *You Just Don't Understand* (1992), for most men talk has become '(...) a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order'. ³⁶ Evaristi shows the defectiveness of this, and one's consequent inability to communicate one's feelings through language. She furthermore assigns a considerable significance to silence. She believes silence is meaningful because it can express those concepts which cannot be explained in words. Meaningful silence is especially evident in the discussion about intergender relationships. Three different types of relationships are discussed in the play: an archetypal father-daughter relationship, a boy-girl relationship with respect to their waking sexuality, and a relationship between the two lovers.

French psycholinguist Jacques Lacan claims in his book *Écrits* that a child learns verbal language from his/her father, and that once one enters the third, symbolic phase (which includes full grasp of language meanings as prescribed by a social order), one's mother is excluded from the process. Here one can posit the question, how can Lacan's idea be applied in the case of the child being a daughter, who is on the basis of her gender excluded from the symbolic? In *Mouthpieces* Evaristi places this question under scrutiny in her examination of a father-daughter relationship. Siobhan is on the phone to her father to whom she has not spoken for some time, and she is talking about her feelings for him. It is only at the end of her monologue that the audience/readers realise that Siobhan has been rehearsing her speech, and once her call comes through the moment is gone and she is left to communicate only trivia:

SIOBHAN. Dad? Hello Dad? Listen, before you say something or I say something else, there's something I've always wanted to call you. Hey... No, don't laugh, it's not cheeky. Really, I'm serious. You've never taken me seriously. Not even when I got married. And I thought that would help. It's meant to. Anyway, I've got this secret name for you and I'd like to tell you. OK? Father. (*Pause.*) Hello? No, that was it. That was the name. Father. Yes. I talk to myself about you. It's been a sort of secret. It's better than 'Dad'. I don't really know why and I've always thought you'd laugh if I talked about it. But you're not laughing are you? No, you're not. I think it's better because it's more important sounding. And you're awful important and it all passed so quick and then I got married and came to Canada and I never seemed to get round to telling you. How important. I tried but I was scared it would sound soppy and sentimental, you know? I think maybe it's something to do with Scotland. They don't exactly kiss or tell or hug, do they? Well we don't. We never did. It's like the place was wearing a big balaclava with no space for the face. You know? You do know? Don't think I'm blaming you or anything. I'm a chip off the old blockage too. Maybe it's just easier across the sea and over the phone. Anyhow... here goes... I love you, father. Hello? Hello? Yes, operator is that my call through now? Thanks. Hello. Hi Dad. Listen before you say something or I say something else... Thanks for the toys... the kids loved them... (p. 1.)

It is evident from Siobhan's words that her relationship with her father is based on unequal terms. Although she is an adult, she is still treated like a child, her opinions are never taken seriously and are laughed at. She believed that when she got married her father might realise that she is an adult, because 'it's meant to [help]'.³⁷ All of this perpetuates the model of an eternal woman-child, sweet, cheeky, vulnerable and in need of protection, an object of admiration in the men's eyes who is handed from father to husband to son, ever to be reflected in their image of her; whereas the men are subjects who admire, their function is active, they are fathers and husbands, the protectors and the breadwinners. In Siobhan's monologue Evaristi examines the inability of the language to express emotions, and the possibility that a cultural tradition might have something to do with it. Once again the dominant cultural imperatives of a society are perceived as the prescriptive force of an individual's gender and societal roles, the shapers of an individual's identity. Evaristi questions whether or not it is possible to have communication between the two genders. The existing words render Siobhan powerless and vulnerable, their meanings are inscribed in silences and remain unsaid.

The same question haunts the boys-girls relationships scene where Evaristi unleashes her sharp Glaswegian humour in the description of sexually charged bickering between the two couples of teenagers. The overall tone of conversation is that of teasing. In a sociolinguistic study of teasing among adults, teasing is often defined as 'a mild and indirect type of reproof for overserious behaviour such as bragging, complaining and extolling'.³⁸ Furthermore, teasing is frequently used to alleviate sexual tension.

BOYS. I try to be taciturn
 Making all the ladies turn
 Seeing me sardonic mean and rough---
 My style is quite laconic---
 VAL. It's nearly catatonic!
 BOYS. She said was it gin
 Was I in a huff? (p. 3)

The boys' linguistic and sexual dominance is swiftly overturned by Val's sardonic comment, directed against the traditional hard-man image. However, although Evaristi makes it her point to mock the man's domination in language use as fallacious, she admits that there is linguistic inequality in the gender interaction. She addresses this inequality through exploration of the use of words whose literal meanings denote parts of the human body, such as 'balls', 'tit' and 'ass'.

SIOBHAN. I was really flattered
 When he said I had balls
 So I called him a tit
 And got hit.
 Oh boy it's hard to compliment
 When girls the words were never meant for
 you
 Doo beee do!
 I was really flattered
 When he said I has sass
 Then he gave me a slap
 On the ass!
 Oh ladies what bewilderment
 Whichever do you think he meant
 Ass or sass? (p. 2)

The words 'balls', 'tit' and 'ass' have sexual connotations, however, in gender interaction there is a clear difference between them from the male perspective. Since the order which prescribes the meanings of words is essentially male-dominated order,

all of the words which signify maleness and therefore have male properties will be seen as central, positive and superior, while those words which signify femaleness will by the same token be perceived as marginal, negative and inferior. The semantic properties of the word 'balls' will shift to mean 'brave', 'courageous', 'up-front', while the semantic properties of the word 'tit' will signify 'cowardly', 'effeminate', 'weakling'. In the same way, 'ass' is always associated with femaleness when having sexual connotations, although it can be perceived as neutral when it refers to 'stupidity'. From this it may be concluded that the words which are charged with male properties have positive (blue) connotations, while those words which are charged with female properties may have either negative (pink) or neutral (lemon), but never positive connotations. This may be a reason why Dale Spender insists that it is necessary to construct a language which would show 'the reality of women's autonomy, women's strength, women's power',³⁹ rather than marginalise them as a 'muted group'.⁴⁰ Evaristi reconstructs the meanings of the existing words rather than searches for alternative language models. She plays with language in order to engender and shift the female-charged words into a centralised (positive) position. The process of shifting the female-charged words from a powerless (negative) to an empowered (positive) position is shown in the word-games sequence.

The word-games sequence explores the process of degendering the language in the three stages. Each stage depicts one point in the history of the lovers' relationship from a female perspective. The first stage includes analysis of the different ways in which women and men experience a relationship. Contrary to women's romantic notion of love, men see a relationship as a contest 'not for the fun or the love --- for

the gain/Scoring [their] points, staking [their] claim'.⁴¹ Evaristi twists the words in order to show how women's language is rendered powerless through male interpretation:

SIOBHAN. (...) My grin became his grind
 Unkind came out of kind
 I wrote alone --- He wrote baloney
 I wrote honey and he wrote phoney.
 I wrote red as in desired
 When he was done the word was tired. (p. 20)

Evaristi shows how communication between women and men is full of metamessages which, according to Tannen, spring out of the 'information about the relations among the people involved, and their attitudes toward what they are saying or doing and the people they are saying or doing it to'.⁴² These metamessages indicate that while women's language is the language of connection and intimacy, men's is the language of status and independence, which assumes aggressive-defensive connotations if this status and independence are in any way threatened. The communication between the two characters is obstructed by their inability to listen to each other, to the extent that it seems as if they are speaking different languages.

In the second stage Evaristi explores a crumbling relationship, where a female character uses words to define her emotions and come to terms with the end of an affair. Evaristi introduces the phrase 'alphabets of doom',⁴³ where the letters in that 'alphabet' serve as clues to Val's emotions. The audience/readers are urged to decode those letters and come up with possible interpretations. In this way, language has become a reflection of Val's tumultuous emotions:

VAL.

(...) How could you fill this house we built
 With alphabets of doom?
 You print the walls with hints then call
 This swarm an empty room. (p. 22)

The linguistic manipulation on the part of Val's lover is indicated by phrases such as 'alphabets of doom' ⁴⁴ and 'print the walls with hints'. ⁴⁵ Val is shown as unable to regain control of the language that has been thus manipulated. However, this is also the next stage in the process of the degendering of language, because the female speaker begins to question the male-dominated language, and introduce her own meanings to the existing words.

The third stage, which mirrors the aftermath of the break-up, represents the final stage in the process of the degendering of language. The language is exposed here as being male-dominated and manipulative.

Crosswords
 SIOBHAN.

Crosswords
 Crosswords
 I don't toss in the night anymore
 Crosswords
 Crosswords
 I feel no sense of loss anymore.
 I live in my black and white square
 I dine with quite erudite clues
 No booze
 No bruises
 Speech confuses
 Won't leave my black and white square.
 Crosswords
 Crosswords
 Across and down and safe and sound my
 Crosswords
 Crosswords
 Limits of logic and line.
 He would take me so far across

I was lost
 He took me so deep down I drowned
 I wound up that game
 I can't remember his name
 Now I live in that black and white square.
 Black and white
 Black and white
 I grown more abstract every night.
 I'll find the perfect clue this year
 I'll solve myself and disappear.
 He would take me so far across
 I was lost
 He took me so deep down I drowned
 I wound up that game
 Can't remember his name
 Now I live in that black and white square
 Now I live in that black and white square
 (*VAL starts off Word games I played with you.*)
 (p. 23)

The act of forgetting her lover's name and the rejection of his language is the act of expurgation, however, there is also a sense of resignation on Val's part with her inability to use language which clearly has male properties.. She claims that she has 'wound up' the word game, that she has rejected the connotations given from the male perspective, and has become reconciled to living in a 'black and white square', removed from the subconscious and multi-interpretations. Her wish is to find 'the perfect clue' in order to 'solve [oneself] and disappear';⁴⁶ in other words she wishes to reconcile the differences between herself as the 'other' and the language which she uses, and which is alien to her. Interestingly, Evaristi makes a difference between the written as opposed to spoken words, 'Speech confuses/Won't leave my black and white square'.⁴⁷ The ordered world of crosswords seems to be more neutral, more abstract, than language used in everyday communication, which is random and prone to misinterpretations. Spoken words are confusing even more so because they are coloured with emotions, and emotions can hurt. Val's abandoning of the spoken

language proposes her shift from the concrete to the abstract. This shift has been mentioned by Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, who echo Sherry Ortner's ⁴⁸ ideas in their article 'Feminist Scholarship and the Social Construction of Woman', when they suggest that '(...) women tend to experience things, feelings and people as concrete rather than abstract, subjectively and interpersonally rather than objectively'. ⁴⁹ Val says that she has 'grown more abstract every night'. ⁵⁰ In this sense, it can be suggested that any freedom she may feel is paradoxically achieved by acquiring male linguistic properties. It can also be suggested that this abstractness and finding the perfect clue refer to another kind of language, different from the spoken and written language, and another kind of a story, different from the story dominated by a male storyteller, both of which could help her resolve her 'otherness' and bring about degenderisation of roles in human relationships. Evaristi does not offer any solution, Val's character is permanently boxed by language in a similar way in which Lady Rachel in Glover's *The Straw Chair* is locked into silence.

4.4. *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses (1981)*

The play moves between the past and the present in telling the story about the life and relationships between the three Scottish-Italian girls, their growing up and loss of illusions. Steph and Jo are sisters, Rita is Steph's best friend. Steph is the brainiest of the three, she is into intellectualising, breaking taboos, exploring different concepts. Jo changes from a little rebel to a charming flower-power girl to a quasi-bohemian housewife, while Rita has always been the most conventional of the three, her only ambition in life was to get married and have children. The play records how the girls change in time,

Steph is an unmarried teacher, Jo marries Steph's lover, and Rita's life resembles a bad soap opera. At the end, there are no resolutions and each character grapples with her own unsatisfactory life.

In *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* Evaristi steps away from a fragmentary sketch-cum-variety-show-style that marked her early theatrical work and enters the next stage of her creative writing which will bring her closer to more traditional, naturalistic dramatic forms. Structurally, the play is divided into five scenes, each of which corresponds to the characters' specific age. Thematically, these five scenes represent significant stages in the lives of the three women, from early childhood to adulthood. Through the intricate relationships between Steph, her younger sister Jo and their friend Rita, Evaristi explores the issue of a woman's identity, her position in a modern society within a constellation of gender roles, and whether and how she can express her sexuality in a predominantly male world. Also, although the issue of national and class identity does not have a central position in the play, it is still visible in the characters' occasional allusions to their background, as well as in Evaristi's choice of their names.

Through the girls' choice of games, conversational topics and even the language that they use, Evaristi identifies them right from the start as white, middle-class, Catholic and Glaswegian. One of the girls makes a daisy chain, Steph and Rita play the tinker-tailor-soldier-sailor-game with the help of a bagful of berries, and later they read a broken hearts' column from a woman's magazine - typical games and interests in which the girls from all the backgrounds used to indulge in the fifties, and indeed today. However, the girls' comments give a new dimension to those games, as will be discussed later in the analysis, setting their background firmly in a middle-class milieu.

The choice of names also indicates that they belong to a particular ethnic community. Steph and Jo's surname is McConnell, which indicates their Irish origin. Evaristi infuses their dialogue with clear signifiers of Glaswegian speech, as well as frequently points to their Catholic background in the course of the play. Similarly, in the case of their friend Rita the identification of her Scottish-Italian origin is established immediately through her given name which places her into the Scottish-Italian Glaswegian community. Evaristi infuses her plays with issues of national and class identities, but these are side issues in *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses*. Here, she is more interested in telling the story of the growing up of the three girls into adulthood and their disappointments when the expectations set by the patriarchal community in which they have been brought up prove false and illusory.

The play's plot is internalised; the audience do not see the key events in the girls' lives happening onstage, instead they are made aware of them through the girls' conversation. By replacing action with verbal descriptions and by fragmenting the play's time, she has subverted the naturalistic dramatic techniques which she utilises in order to reexamine them and question their appropriateness in representing a woman's world. This is in accordance with beliefs of some theatre critics, such as Joyce McMillan who postulates that

the question of pressure in live theatre towards the loud, the action-packed and the vaguely Ramboesque raises a deeper question about the relationship between women writers and the theatre - the idea that our conception of "the dramatic" is somehow a masculine one and hostile to women's work.⁵¹

McMillan further suggests that if women's writing is inclined to be polite, evasive and take refuge in description, rather than physical action, 'then that must be frankly acknowledged as a limitation when it comes to producing powerful, dynamic drama, and not elevated into some mystical adherence to "female values"'.⁵² Jenny Killick, on the contrary, believes that although there are women who have learnt to write in what is considered to be 'cut-and-thrust', action-packed, masculine style, this style contrasts the rhythm of women's lives which is about 'smoothing things over, conciliating, avoiding conflict'.⁵³ Killick is interested to work with women playwrights and theatre practitioners who wish to develop a form that would show 'the meaning of tiny nuances of conversation and gesture, [where] high-speed action and actual violence [are] at a minimum'⁵⁴ and conflict is resolved dynamically 'through character',⁵⁵ which is, according to her, central to any drama.

In the history of Scottish theatre of the past thirty years, there have been many women playwrights who have sought to create such a form. Amongst them, Evaristi has succeeded in creating an exclusively women's world before her audience. It is the world seen through women's eyes and based on their particular experiences, marked further by the conspicuous absence of physical presentation of men on-stage.

It has already been mentioned earlier in this study that a number of feminist theorists of language, such as Dale Spender and Deborah Tannen, stipulate that language functions as a product and a mechanism of expression of male-dominated society. In this sense, women have been systematically excluded from it and devoiced. From this one might conclude that by excluding physically men from the stage, Evaristi turns the tables and

gives voice to her women. This is only partly true, since the idea that by being absent from the stage the male characters have been automatically devoiced is a little far-fetched and difficult to support. On the contrary, although Evaristi removes them from the stage, she does not exclude them from the story. It would be interesting to see how the shifting of centrality from the male to the female perspective affects the characters shown on the stage, as well as those talked about, and whether and how it influences their respective relationships. In a number of sociolinguistic and anthropolinguistic studies it has been found that, on the one hand, when men talk they mostly place themselves or other men in the central position of the subject of their stories, and their stories commonly have to do with some sort of an action which is intended to show its subject in a positive light. For example, Johnstone suggests in *Gender and Conversational Interaction* (1993) that 'when a male storyteller is not the protagonist in his story, the protagonist is [another] man; men rarely tell stories involving women'.⁵⁶ Women's stories (herstories), according to Johnstone, on the other hand, 'revolve around the norms of the community and joint action by groups of people'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, rather than concentrating on the actions, women's stories tend to express the emotions that those actions raise in the participants. They 'tell stories about themselves, about other women, and about men',⁵⁸ and they are also more likely to show men, rather than themselves or other women, as the subjects of their stories. Even if the subject is female, she will be presented, reinterpreted and judged according to and in view of her relation to some man. The female characters' bickering in *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* is always somehow connected with a man, or a man-made societal code. For example, in a childhood games scene, Steph and Rita quarrel about the images of a sailor and a tinker from the old nursery rhyme.

Steph cheats after she has drawn a sailor as a husband prediction, and continues to recite the rhyme:

STEPH. (...) Poor man, beggarman, thief, tinker.
(The bag is empty.)
 RITA. That's definitely *it* then now eh? *Tinker*. Bet you wish you'd stuck in with sailor now eh? Bet you're just praying it's really sailor now. (...)
 (...)
 They move around a lot and they steal.
 STEPH. You're just ignorant. Tinkers, for your information, are like gypsies. They've got wild eyes.
 RITA. That's gypsies. And, you don't get to get one sucking stones.
 STEPH. Tinkers are gypsies.
 RITA. Why are they called tinkers then? Eh?
 STEPH. Well... tinkers are like... *Scottish* gypsies.
 RITA. Eh?
 STEPH. They don't camp out so often... cos of the weather. But their eyes are still dead wild. Gypsies stop at... Lockerbie.
 RITA. They've got no morals.
 STEPH. That's sailors.
 RITA. They move around a lot *and* they've got no morals.
(Long pause.)
 STEPH. They're good at bar-b-ques.
 RITA. They're dirty, they are they're filthy dirty. *(Pause.)* Wouldn't eat a single bar-b-que from the likes of them. Manky.
 STEPH. Are not. 'S just their *skin* tones.
 RITA. My Dad signed a petition. Just imagine those big murky hands all over your white wedding dress. Eeh-gugs. Poor you.
 STEPH. *(Angrily.)* You shut up you. You're talking about the man I love. *(Confrontation. Then helpless giggles.)* (...)
 (scene i, pp. 4-5)⁵⁹

Steph and Rita are building into the images of a sailor and a tinker the societal prejudices of their class, and, amongst others, prejudices about someone's class and ethnic background. There is another prejudice that springs to mind upon reading this citation: the patriarchal concept of the white wedding, and a woman's function as a bride, a wife, and a mother. The game itself is geared towards the girls' preparation

for their future gender role within matrimony. The idea that they will marry when they grow up is never questioned. The game focuses on whom the societal norms find it acceptable for them to marry, and one's acceptability to be a groom is based on one's professional, racial and moral attributes. The images that the game raises can be divided according to those three attributes. Tailor, poor man and beggarman carry professional attributes, because they establish the financial support that a girl will be provided with by her future husband. Thief, tinker, soldier and sailor carry moral attributes on the basis of the common prejudices that each type is given by society. Rita and Steph in turn imitate their mothers ('Ever since my best nail broke.')⁶⁰ and imitate the attitudes learnt from their fathers ('they move around a lot and they've got no morals. (...) my Dad signed the petition. (...)).⁶¹ The girls' comments furthermore assign racial attributes to the words 'thief' and 'tinker'. It is understood from their conversation that, in the puritan society in which they have been brought up, one's dishonesty is linked with the colour of one's skin. There is an instant discord in the girls' opinions: Rita copies, without questioning, the societal hang-up about anyone whose profession, skin colour or ethic does not correspond to the dominant class, while Steph is disinclined to accept such an attitude at its face value. The discord is on the surface only, though, since neither of the girls actually question their own gender role in the societal constellation.

Rita's and Steph's tiff arises from the attempts of both girls to stand out, to appear either better or more mature than the other. In her bestseller book *You Just Don't Understand* (1992), Deborah Tannen posits that any such attempt amongst the female peers will be criticised from early childhood. In her words, 'emphasis is placed on

displaying similarities and matching experiences' ⁶² and, accordingly, the language used by the women will be seen 'primarily [as] a language of rapport: a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships'. ⁶³ When their vying threatens to escalate into a serious confrontation, Steph glosses over any feelings of animosity with 'helpless giggles' ⁶⁴ and in this way she re-establishes the rapport. Laughter, yet again, is used by Evaristi to reduce tension and restore balance in the communicational hierarchy.

Another example of a disturbed balance in the communicational hierarchy of an intragender interaction is Steph and Jo's conflict in scene iv. The cause of their conflict is the fact that Jo is about to marry Steph's ex-lover, Garry:

JO. Honestly, Steph. Everything changes and everything passes. I mean, you haven't even bothered to talk to me about it. And you kept it so secret Garry and you. I mean you did, didn't you? It was that kind of *relationship*. I don't think you should take it out on me. It's not fair.

RITA. Oh stop it. Mountains out of molehills. It's just the day that's doing it.

JO. I mean Garry's really fond of you. He said you taught him a lot. It's something we've got in common, how much you've taught us.

RITA. Well, she's a teacher isn't she? Let's start clearing up.

JO. And after all keeping it secret was a kind of omen, wasn't it? Garry says it was always on the cards that your relationship was... *finite*.

RITA. What?

STEPH. Finite. Means bound to finish eventually. (scene iv, p. 51a)

It becomes evident from this example how the women's lives are affected by the attitudes and beliefs of their male counterparts, even though those men are not physically present on the stage. Steph and Jo clash over a man, but the women's verbal conflict bears no violence. While Jo keeps talking in excess to justify herself,

Steph responds with silence, and Rita tries to act as a mollifying agent between the two sisters. During Jo's speeches, one cannot but wonder whether or not it is Garry, Jo's bridegroom, who speaks through her. Jo constantly mentions Garry, she quotes his words and imitates his attitudes. In this sense, she becomes the spokesperson for his character who is in absentia. It seems that the crucial events in the women's lives and their conversations always concentrate on men.

In the first three scenes, the characters' conversations mainly concentrate on boys and relationships, as they slowly become aware of their developing bodies and budding sexuality. Typical images linked with romance are used, such as a lover 'with wild eyes', ⁶⁵ the 'white wedding dress', ⁶⁶ the girls read a personal column in a woman's magazine, a younger sister who is a tomboy uses her elder sister's make-up, etc. The girls' dreams and aspirations are still perceived through the lense of their community's predominantly patriarchal ideology. This perception of the female characters from the male perspective is particularly evident in Rita who displays the most conventional attitudes out of the three characters in the play. In an early conversation about sex, while Steph reads an add in a magazine, a thirteen-year-old Rita propounds that teenage and extramarital sex is a sin.

STEPH. However, having been a married woman I am aware of a certain physical attraction between us. (*They consider.*)

RITA. Steph?

STEPH. Mmmm.

RITA. You know how just kissing is *ten*...

STEPH. Mmm.

RITA. And *French* kissing is twenty - Och, nothing.

On you go.

STEPH. I've lost the place. (*She looks.*)

RITA. French kissing *is* twenty just isn't it?

STEPH. Och, yes. Mind you a girl I know from St. Aloysius puts it at fifteen, just. Mind you, they're co-ed.

RITA. My God. Can you imagine?

STEPH. (*Ambiguously.*) No.

RITA. On you go.

STEPH. ... certain physical attraction between us. I suppose I should sever all connections with this person but I find I am constantly putting off the moment. My own friends -

RITA. Steph, *we're* best friends aren't we?

STEPH. Natch. (*Looking up.*) You sure this is going to suit me?

RITA. Natch. Well, what would you think if the boy were to put his tongue in but the girl was to keep her teeth *clenched*? (*Clenches teeth.*) Ike yiss.

STEPH. What boy?

RITA. Fifteen would you think. Mean I had a spotless copy book. An even going by your St. Aloysius friend's reckoning it would be even less it would be... half way between ten and fifteen which is twelve and a -

STEPH. *What* boy?

RITA. Och, search me, kiddo. On you go. These mags *kill* me. (*Attacks Steph's hair.*)

STEPH. Ouch. I find I am constantly putting off the moment. My own friends are mostly married and I would be so lonely were it not for our, as yet, innocent excursions.

RITA. That's a sin, isn't it?

STEPH. How is it?

RITA. No - ya eejit. I didn't mean it was a *sin*. I meant it wis a sin.

STEPH. Oh, right. Here's the answer. Dear Confused.

RITA. Mean it's not as if I want to get a name. Like Theresa Malone. Mind you I think that was a pack of lies *in spite* of what she left in her schoolbag abandoned by the Infants' Entrance. I still don't believe it. I mean, for goodness sake, eighty's all the way. In my humble opinion a hundred's impossible. (*STEPH has turned round and is staring at her.*) Sorry kid.

STEPH. Dear Confused, I think you already know your wisest path. Leave this man alone, he is not free. To do otherwise could only lead to heartache.

RITA. I mean a *hundred*. Swinging from the chandeliers or something. (...) Mean even swinging from the chandeliers would only be eighty still. Except higher up. (*Pause.*) (...) (scene I, pp. 15-17)

This is an attitude which corresponds with the traditional patriarchal ideology based on the virgin-strumpet dichotomy. In their article 'Feminist scholarship and the social

construction of woman' (1985) Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn argue that this dichotomy, which they choose to call the madonna/whore dichotomy, has been perpetuated by men in order to 'ensure both the sanctity and inheritance of [men's] families and their extrafamilial sexual pleasure'.⁶⁷ The process of the girls' conditioning into future wives and mothers now becomes clear. It is the socialisation process which began from an early age, in the games of wearing jewelry made of flowers and fruits and reciting suggestive nursery rhymes. Steph and Rita display a natural curiosity about sex which proves to be already conditioned by societal norms. In the girls' conversation different stages of love making are assigned numbers; they are normalised by the patriarchal ideology according to their acceptability. In this way, this ideology controls female sexuality. If a girl goes over a certain number ('for goodness sake, eighty's all the way')⁶⁸ she will be branded by society, 'get a name'.⁶⁹ Throughout the girls' seemingly lighthearted conversation, there are echoes of the dominant ideology in the shape of the broken hearts' column, with its simplified, normalised ethics.

All of the three characters are products of this socialisation in their respective ways. In scene iv, on the eve of Jo's wedding day, Rita is determined to ignore any allusions to Jo's premarital pregnancy:

RITA.	You look just lovely, Jo.
JO.	Yes, it's true what they say about your complexion improving.
RITA.	Really? The more I fancied someone the more whiteheads I used to get.
JO.	Rita. I don't mean to embarrass you but is it really as sore as they make out?
RITA.	No... It's only a bit sore, but it only lasts a minute...

JO. A minute?

RITA. Yes, it only lasts a minute, it's not a bad sort of pain and then it... well, then it's... lovely. Mind you, I'm blessed with Peter. He's amazingly... sensitive. Och, imagine talking about your brother to you like that.

JO. Rita, for Christ's sake! I'm pregnant. You know I'm pregnant. You can see I'm pregnant. I meant was labour - having a baby - sore as they say it is.

(Long pause.)

RITA. Och I'm sure you're just a few days late, JoJo. It'll be the wedding nerves that have postponed your workings. Do you want me to fix your alice band on? I've brought these transparent kirbygrips... (scene iv, p. 45)

Here Rita functions as an advocate of the convention which stipulates that premarital pregnancy is socially and morally unacceptable. Her way of dealing with any action which might be in conflict with the societal codes is simply to ignore its existence. It can be suggested that in *Rita*, Evaristi portrays a model middle-class housewife. In support of this suggestion, Rita's moral prudishness is accompanied by her acceptance of the image of beauty encouraged by patriarchal ideology. At the beginning of scene iv she enters 'wearing a suit with a short skirt [and she's] carrying a vanity case'.⁷⁰ In scene v she confesses that she has resorted to acupuncture and dieting after her husband told to her that he almost had an affair with another woman:

JO. Does it work for any addiction or is it just food and fags?

RITA. You've got to want to stop. (*Giggles and drinks.*) I wanted to stop a lot. I mean after Peter broke down and told me he almost succumbed to Janice Thingumy I said to myself, 'Rita, you've got to take yourself in hand'. They never consummated, girls, honestly. But it shook me. Just the thought of him thinking about it shook me. (...)

So then when I heard about the acupuncture I thought I'd try it. Peter and I were fine by then, but I began to get worried that I was letting my figure slip. Anyhow I ended up with needles in me and it worked. Peter's just crazy about the difference. (scene v, p. 67)

Through humour, Evaristi portrays the preoccupation of a modern woman with her image, both inner and outer, according to the cultural conventions of patriarchal society. The reason why Rita has decided to change her appearance is her husband's dissatisfaction with it, and she marks the success of her transformation proportionately to his approval. Evaristi is giving us a model of a 'walking, talking, crying, living doll', perfectly dressed and groomed and unwilling to transcend the limitations of societal norms. When Jo suggests that they should meet more often and hints at the importance of *supportiveness* among women, a kind of sisterhood, Rita misses her point, in what can be seen as an ambiguity between ignorance and choice:

JO. You know I think we should get together more. We were quite close when we were younger weren't we? I mean don't you think we could forget things like *pride* when we talk to each other, and we could meet and... you could come over to Cumbernauld. Make a day of it. I don't think I really liked other women when I was young. And that's wrong I think -

RITA. I don't like other women. I mean *Other* Women I know because I'm a Catholic I should but it would be bloody impossible loving Janice Thingmy. With that waist.

JO. No, you don't understand. I don't mean Love thy Neighbour Christianity or hippy Peace and Love, I mean genuine *supportiveness* between women.

RITA. Bod, I think I will need some support. Well, just a drop more.

JO. I've always wanted to apologise to you, Steph. I was so cruel about you and Garry having been lovers.

STEPH. Be quiet, Jo, or I'll get angry. That was years ago. I won't hear another word. (*Vigorous rubbing of ears.*) Have you been *imagining* that I've been lovelorn about your husband all these years? If you have you're wrong, I promise you that. I wasn't as young as you maybe, but I was only -

JO. Alright, alright. I just meant...

STEPH. I know what you meant. Just because I happen not to have got married. You think you're so modern, Jo, but you obviously see me as on the shelf. (scene v, pp. 67-8)

The patriarchal ideology has disunited the women by making them accomplices in the process of chastising those among them who have rejected the images and the gender roles that this same patriarchal ideology has forced on them. In the above example, Evaristi subverts the three different images of the eternal feminine. Firstly, Rita rejects the image of a thin woman as a cultural imperative signifying attractiveness and a (false) sense of innocence:

RITA. (...)I don't like other women. I mean *Other* Women I know because I'm a Catholic I should but it would be bloody impossible loving Janice Thingmy. With that waist. (scene v, pp. 67-8)

Far from promoting the concept of sisterhood, the perpetuation of such an image promotes competition between the women. Secondly, when Jo talks about supportiveness between women, referring of course to the concept of sisterhood, Rita mockingly mentions alcohol as a support in loneliness and depression, indicating in this way the image of a drunken slag which can be associated with the latter part of the virgin/strumpet dichotomy:

RITA. Bod, I think I will need some support. Well, just a drop more. (scene v, pp. 67-8)

The third image is the one of an old maid, the name the society mistakenly gives to an unmarried woman of a certain age.

STEPH. (...) Just because I happen not to have got married. You think you're so modern, Jo, but you obviously see me as on the shelf. (scene v, pp. 67-8)

The way in which the socialisation process moulds people's (and particularly women's) beliefs and attitudes is evident from the development of Jo's character. In the play, Jo is followed from her toddler years to motherhood. In one of her earliest appearances in scene ii, in the so-called 'communion speech', she is a tomboy whose resistance to awareness of any change her body is going through is as fierce as her distaste for romantic notions of love and marriage:

JO. (...) If anyone else tells me that I am big for my age I will kill them dead with a big sharp knife, so I will. 'You are big for your'... *wham*. I'm a minor they couldn't do much. Mind you I'd have to carry my birth certificate to *prove it*. The worst day of my whole life ever was my first holy communion, an it's meant to be your best. (...) It was Peter ruined it. My occasion. He did. I heard him say something to my Mum an once after I'd heard it everything was ruined. I'd just put my white dress on an I was fixin the rosebuds - they're full of wires thon - and I heard him. He said, *Look* at the size of her he said. He said if she walks down the road like that, they'll throw confetti at her. Pig. Because I was big he said it.
Pig. For my age. (...) (scene ii, pp. 9-10)

In this instance Jo is eight years old. She is in a prepubertal phase when the world around her and changes in her body confuse her profoundly. Her behaviour is often paradoxical. She dislikes the developing of her body, which can be taken as both a sign of her rejection of sexuality in accordance with the dominant ideology which renders women's sexuality unacceptable, and a sign of rejection of her future maternal function. At the same time she is fascinated with her elder sister's outfits and make-up, in accordance with the image of the feminine woman which is maintained by that same ideology. The following scenes will see her go through a rebellious phase of an unconventional youth who is attracted by quasi-bohemianism and quasi-Zen Buddhism as a way of escaping from facing up to her femininity and sexuality. All of this changes

when she falls pregnant and decides upon a formal church wedding with Garry, the father of her unborn child, so as not to 'upset anyone'.⁷¹ She defends Garry's view against contraception as not having anything to do with church doctrine. It derives from a belief that contraception is 'sort of against spontaneity',⁷² and that it might upset the cosmic pattern. Similarly, when Steph challenges her on the topic of her and Garry's unborn child's gender, she says 'Oh, no. We've got a feeling',⁷³ voicing in this manner Garry's hope of procuring a male heir. In both cases, Jo fails to see how Garry's apparent rejection of the dominant ideology actually serves as a means of its reinforcement and preservation. Steph comments on this compromise to the societal norms and tries to make her sister see its hypocrisy:

STEPH. I thought you were going to get married in red.
When did it become all flowery powery?
JO. I changed my mind. Like Garry.
RITA. I think this bow's getting crumpled looking.
STEPH. Yes. (*Pours more sherry.*)
JO. (*Quoting uncomfortably.*) I mean to say
everything changes. Everything passes. You've just got to flow
with it. You have. You wouldn't have wanted to keep him against
his will, would you? Not that anybody can *keep* anybody else. Mean
to say, nobody *owns* anybody else's body, *do* they? I mean you were
the one that told me things like that. Before I met Garry properly.
(scene iv, pp. 49-50)

Jo's response is the response of a man who is trying to convince his lover that the break-up is a necessary step. In this instance, Jo has assumed Garry's role, and she brings the male character on the stage. From this point on, Jo seems to have become a spokesperson for the invisible Garry, hence the hypocrisy of her final call for *sisterhood* and *supportiveness*. She tries to defend herself when Steph accuses her of seeing her 'as on the shelf' for not having gotten married, however, truthfully, this is

exactly what both she and the rest of the community think. Rita repeatedly uses the expression 'a career girl' with regard to Steph as an indication that a woman cannot have it both ways, but must choose between having a family and having a career. Even Garry, outwardly bohemian and radical, chooses to marry the less independent and more easily influenced sister. Steph's description of the sexual side of their relationship indicates a possible reason why Garry has chosen not to marry her:

STEPH.	I'm not a career girl. I just love working, listen, Rita -
RITA.	Let me make you a nice cup of coffee -
STEPH.	People think just because you're not pretty you're not as fussy. It's not true. Don't move. I don't want any coffee. I'm just as fussy.
RITA.	Alright.
STEPH.	I was better than him in bed at first.
RITA.	Look. I'll just work out what your score was, and then we'll read it out and then we'll spruce up a wee bit. OK? You girls! What a family! It's only last year that Peter stopped rocking in bed at night.
STEPH.	It was funny being better at it though I was a novice.
RITA.	See you lot and your wedding nerves. (<i>Looking at instructions.</i>) It's all about symmetry. (<i>Makes notes.</i>) Throw a coin!
STEPH.	I was better. It was <i>so</i> funny.
RITA.	The index is dead complicated.
STEPH.	Maybe it's something about posing for a person, d'you think?
RITA.	Hold on, we're nearly there.
STEPH.	I mean all those times I brought him soup in that church. D'you know he didn't believe you could <i>make</i> home made tomato soup. I used to bring it to him, when he was worrying about colouring in the firmament, you know? And d'you know he used to ignore the other girls helping with the mural. He said I was real.
RITA.	D'you think your sister's alright?
STEPH.	And they dressed just outrageous. You know what art students are like. But he ignored them and I was Mary Magdalene.
RITA.	Shoosh. I've got it. It's here. I've got the page.

STEPH. Moment he entered me I came. It's not fair that is it? Not the first time. It's not fair. It's meant to be clumsy and horrid and then you're meant to go on and look for something more mature. You're not meant to just die with the blessedness of it. Are you?

RITA. I've got it... I've got the page. Don't take any more sherry. It's not in your nature.

STEPH. You're meant to bleed too. I never did. I just came like a maniac.

RITA. Here you are. It's nice to talk, isn't it? It's been yonks! Here you are. It's this page here -

STEPH. (*Taking book and reading*) Here?

RITA. Yes, there.

STEPH. Here? Are you sure?

RITA. Natch.

STEPH. (*Reads.*) It says I'm looking at an empty lake under a barren tree.

(*Pause.*)

RITA. Och, it's just a phase. (scene iv, pp. 56-8)

All the clichés pertaining to a woman's sexuality are repeated in this conversation. For example, an outrageous dress and red colour signify woman's immorality (Jo wanted to be wed in red but decided upon a more suitable, conventional colour). A woman should be innocent; she should not enjoy sexual intercourse because her first functions are to give a man pleasure and be a vessel for reproduction. For example, in scene v, Jo feels that her body is not hers any more, a comment which defies the idea that motherhood is inherent to all women. Any woman who transgresses the societal codes of behaviour is treated like an outcast by her community. The religious images of the virgin-strumpet dichotomy are hinted at in Steph's description of her and Garry's affair. Garry says that she is 'real', meaning pure, unadulterated. However, her independent spirit and fierce sexuality, which he himself has awakened in her, frighten him and he turns her into Mary Magdalene, the Biblical character who has come to symbolise a repentant sinner. At the same time, he portrays a more impressionable Jo

as Madonna, the Biblical epitome of purity. Interestingly, the Madonna on the mural is the pregnant Madonna, reflecting the fact that Jo and Garry's wedding is based on a compromise with convention. Again, Garry's images of both women are based on the virgin-strumpet dichotomy, and they accordingly show how the patriarchal ideology decides what is acceptable or not in woman's behaviour. Steph's aggressive sexuality and intellectual superiority place her outside the boundaries of acceptability. In this sense, the prophecy which she reads in Rita's book can be interpreted in the following way. 'An empty lake' is a reflection of her loneliness as a single thirty plus woman who still clandestinely dreams of romance, while 'a barren tree' commonly represents a barren womb. Steph is childless and her wish to bear a child is reflected in her choice of profession (she is a primary school teacher) and in the overbearing attention she shows to Daisy, Jo and Garry's daughter. When she is asked by Rita, at the end of the play, if she still loves Garry, her reply is that '[she] think[s] [she] love[s] him the way [Rita is] jealous of Julie Bobolowski', ⁷⁴ a girl Peter used to fancy when they were teenagers and whose slender blond-haired image Rita imagines is the model of a feminine woman. Both Garry and Julie Bobolowski have become 'green grasses' from the play's title, the abstractions which represent those things in life that both women crave but cannot possess. This is also evident from Steph's final self-deluding claim that '[she doesn't] mind not being married' ⁷⁵ and Rita's placid reply 'You're quite right, darlin. In fact sometimes I even envy you'. ⁷⁶

Although Rita has openly rejected Jo's call for 'sisterhood' and 'supportiveness among women' the link between the three characters is evident from their interaction and the language that they use. On the whole, the tone of their conversation is positive,

interruptions are introduced in support and agreement among the speakers, and there is no open conflict. Any situation that might prove potentially threatening to equilibrium is immediately toned down, either through use of a mediator (Rita), humorous remarks, or by silence on the part of one of the participants in the interaction. A good example of this is the conversation between Rita and Steph in the previous example from the play. Rita constantly interrupts Steph's confessional mode of storytelling. Her remarks have not got any immediate link with the topic of the conversation and they are not meant to stop Steph's story. Their main function is to alleviate its seriousness and any potential embarrassment on the part of both the speaker (Steph) and the listener (herself), allowing at the same time for the speaker's story to flow in an almost monologic mode. This mode stops at some stage and the interaction transfers from telling the story about the past event, Steph's first sexual encounter, to exchange of information about the present event, i.e. discussion about Steph's present situation, or the meeting of the three women after a long time for an afternoon picnic. At no point in the interaction does either of the two participants intrude into each other's speech, and any interruption that ensues is in the function of rapport, rather than a disagreement or a competition. The language used by the characters is urban girls' slang, such as 'natch', etc. Curses or any other taboo words are avoided and euphemisms are used instead. Any potentially embarrassing words or topics, if used, are ignored, such as when Rita ignores Steph's referring to orgasm and bleeding in her description of her first sexual experience. This, on the whole, is in accordance with the proposals of certain theorists, such as Jespersen, that women are more polite and indirect in their interaction. However, it has been shown earlier in this analysis that the portrayal of the women in *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* is largely influenced

and controlled by the absent men, that is; Evaristi's characters are seen through the male perspective. This perspective is abandoned only in the rare confessional moments (such as Steph's description of her first sexual experience) where the women's dissatisfaction with their situation is shown clearly.

4.5. *Commedia* (1982)

Elena is a middle-aged widow of a Glaswegian-Italian family. Her two sons and daughters-in-law gather in her house for New Year's eve. The elder son Cesare is a successful entrepreneur and is married to Gianna, a model housewife who loves opera and suffers from allergies. The younger son Stefano is a failed actor, married to Lucy, a young American photographer of Italian extraction. Among other things, the family discusses a young Bolognan teacher, Davide, who has befriended Elena. Davide arrives for a brief visit, but returns after the family have departed. A clumsy seduction scene follows during which Davide is trying to persuade Elena to have an affair with him. Lucy interrupts the scene, but soon leaves. Elena agrees to join Davide for a holiday in Bologna, however she tells her family that she is travelling alone. They decide to make her a surprise visit, and after discovering her in Davide's flat, Stefano and Gianna insist that she return to Glasgow with them. Their bickering is interrupted by a tragedy. Cesare, who is fond of trainspotting, has gone to a local train station and is killed in a terrorist bombing. Elena returns to Glasgow with Stefano, Gianna and Lucy, but without Davide. Davide follows shortly, but it is obvious that their affair has reached an end. Gianna and her daughter move in with Elena, and Lucy decides to break up her shaky marriage with filandering Stefano and return to America.

In her 1982 play *Commedia*, Evaristi describes a brief period in the lives of an Italian-Glaswegian family. The central issues which she explores in this play are a woman's sexuality and motherhood, and how these issues are seen by the predominantly patriarchal Italian-Glaswegian community. The play exposes certain popular misconceptions about gender and national identities. In the interview that has been conducted for the purpose of this study, the author remarked that the play had grown

out of her interest in exploring the notion of how 'the older woman younger man's scenario in our culture is seen with great seeming empathy but in fact is always (...) punished by it not working out'.⁷⁷ Having taken this idea as her starting point, the author composes a complex story about the relationships between six very different characters whose only common denominator, besides their familial link, is that all of them belong to the first or second generation of Scots Italians. For Evaristi this is a significant point, for by giving them the same cultural background and the same language, she proceeds to show how these can become the tools by which they will distort their vision of reality, of themselves and of each other. The protagonists' everyday life, hopes and delusions are reflected in the central character of Elena, a middle-aged Italian widow. After her husband's death and her children having grown up and left home, she finds the role of an old-fashioned family matron, which she has upheld all of her life, to be increasingly uncomfortable. Her uneasiness is expressed in a nursery rhyme which she used to sing for her sons, and in which the image of a mother is compared with the image of a witch:

Tin Mags the kitchen witch
 Has a colander hat
 And a nose with a twitch
 She looks like a Mummy
 For most of the week
 She tucks you in bed
 And smacks you for cheek
 But not very often
 Just once in a while
 She lets us go crazy
 And lets us go wild
 It's only with metal things
 Stuff that can't break
 But spoons can be rattled
 And saucepans can shake
 We can bang all the doors
 We can crash all the pots

She sets the alarm
 We've to stop on the dot...
 Then the witch becomes Mamma
 And quiet times reign
 Then we're glad to be good
 Little boys once again. (act I, scene i, p. 14) ⁷⁸

The mother-witch dichotomy is an old one and it has clear associations with the virgin-strumpet dichotomy. Through the mother-witch imagery, Evaristi explores the traditional views that silence, prudence, caring and purity are attributes commonly associated with the figure of a mother, embodied in Catholic ideology in the image of the Madonna. However, there is another point that ensues from these verses, that is the matter of who holds the control in a relationship between the mother/witch and the men/boys in Elena's life and in her story. The witch referred to in the verses is the kitchen witch, placing a woman firmly in the domestic sphere. The duality of a woman's image, between a quiet mother figure and a raunchy 'Tin Mags' who allows boys to go wild, is reciprocated by the dichotomy in the boys' behaviour between 'good little boys' and crazy and wild pot-crashing spoons-rattling hoodlums. The former is the way that one should behave, the latter is the way one wishes one could behave. In both cases, the woman's control is superficial. It shows how she has been manipulated into a position lacking any real power. In the same way, Elena's sons refuse to accept her relationship with a much younger man because such a behaviour is seen as unacceptable by the predominantly patriarchal cultural imperatives of their community. Even more so, Stefano and Cesare refuse to accept their mother's affair, because their admission of the falsity of the model of a mother which they have been brought up with would mean that the whole ensuing system of values is faulty too.

When Stefano storms into Davide's Bologna flat to take his mother home, his attitude reveals the hypocrisy of this system of values:

STEFANO. (*Quietly.*) Mamma, I've got this crystal clear picture of everyone, every single person you know, sniggering behind your back because you've taken up with some cynical stud who'll ditch you in no time. My life, it's different. In my business, it's par for the course. Affairs, divorces, one night stands in theatrical digs in nylon sheets -

LUCY. Nylon, huh?

STEFANO. But that's not your world. Your world wouldn't let you get away with it. They'd break you down, my darlin. And you're not strong, admit it -

ELENA. Oh, I admit it.

STEFANO. You're delicate. There is a quarter of a century between you. Look, if the cosseted movie stars with uplifts in their tits don't get away with it, how do you think you'll make out? I'm being cruel to be kind. Face it. Accept. Before the sneers and the gossip get under way. These days even Bardot's making a fool of herself. (act II, scene i, p. 29)

It is clear from Stefano's reaction that the rules of conduct for man and woman are very different. While a man's relationship with a younger woman is condoned, even glorified, (e.g. Stefano is eight years his wife's senior), a woman risks being ridiculed if she chooses to have a relationship with a younger man. Stefano calls such an affair 'impossible' and 'unlikely', ⁷⁹ and according to him it is not an answer to his mother's loneliness. When Elena accuses him of indifference towards her future, he shrugs off her accusations:

STEFANO. Of course I did. I thought it was terrible that a woman like you should be widowed. I don't begrudge you anything. I adore you. I'd like to see you remarried, less lonely. I hate you being stranded in that big house by yourself. (...) (act II, scene I, p. 28)

Stefano is concerned about the image that his mother may present to the world by remaining single and taking a young lover. He thinks it is terrible that she is widowed, and would like to see her 'remarried, less lonely'.⁸⁰ One may notice that the convention is placed before Elena's needs. She is a single woman in a world where a woman of a certain age is not seen as being capable of standing on her own. Additionally, Stefano tells Elena that '[he doesn't] begrudge [her] anything',⁸¹ on the contrary, '[he] adore[s her]'.⁸² It is evident from his words that a woman is seen as an object in a man's gaze. She is looked upon and judged by the cultural imperatives which were made by men to convey men's position of power and prestige. With these words Stefano also places himself in the position of a protector, filling in the shoes of his absent father. For example, Stefano and Elena's verbal exchange in Davide's flat shows Stefano in a dual son-father role. He feels that he needs to put a stop to his mother's 'improper' behaviour so as not to bring stain on the honour of 'la famiglia'. However, at the same time, as a son he cannot simply order his mother to do what he wishes. Therefore he engages in an act of negotiation during which he tries to persuade Elena just how improper and ludicrous her behaviour is. In the course of his persuasion, he tries to strengthen his argument by drawing Elena's attention to her looks, because he knows that for her this is a vulnerable issue. An affair such as hers is for young girls, not women of her age, and 'these days even Bardot's making a fool of herself'.⁸³ With this statement he asserts an image of beauty as perpetuated by men, not women, since the actress in question became established as a sex icon in the film world of the fifties and sixties, and has been admired and lusted after by several generations of men. Also, agewise, Bardot belongs to Elena's generation. Stefano is implying that even such a beauty is nowadays passé, let alone a woman like Elena

who, in men's eyes, if well preserved, is nevertheless ordinary looking. This coincides with Elena's own fears about the inappropriateness of her dalliance with Davide, for although she enjoys the change, she is also insecure in her own sex appeal and the nature of Davide's attraction to her. For example, she refuses to let him into the bathroom because she is too insecure to show him her naked body. Having met Davide's ex-girlfriend at the party, she is most acutely reminded of the fragility of their affair and the barriers that their age difference sets between them. Also, she feels uncertain about the clothes that she has allowed Davide to talk her into wearing on the evening Stefano comes to Davide's flat. Stefano at once finds fault with her 'scarlet blouse with black trousers':⁸⁴

STEFANO. (...) Oh, Mamma, look at yourself. I've never seen you dressed like that, you look ridiculous.

ELENA. Do I?

LUCY. No.

STEFANO. Yes.

ELENA. I've never interfered with your private life. I haven't, Stef, have I? I'm miles above the age of consent.

STEFANO. You don't sound like yourself either. 'Above the age of consent. 'Has lover boy been teaching you about the rights of the individual? You're making an idiot of yourself and I'm not going to let you. (act II, scene I, p. 27)

Stefano is referring to the model of a traditional mother figure who stays at home, makes tapestries, wears black and mourns after her lost husband. She is expected to '[wrap] her hanky round her finger, [lick] it and [wipe] mark [of dirt] on Gianna's face'⁸⁵ because 'all Mammams must do it'.⁸⁶ She does not go on holidays with a lover, smoke or speak her mind, and she does not wear red, red being the colour of a 'putana'.⁸⁷ However, red is also the colour of love, and passion, and Stefano's reaction implies that by forbidding Elena to wear red he disapproves of her change into

a self-reliant sexual being. Elena refers to this in her story about a red dress given to her by an uncle from Chicago.

ELENA. (...) I was a young girl and my present was a red dress. It was a miracle, it fitted me. It was stunning and, wee balloon that I was, I cried when I tried it on. I have never seen a thing so fine, covered in red sequins like fish scales, a glittering slinky fish, and suddenly I wasn't embarrassed about having breasts anymore. Of course I was never allowed to wear it. Good girls didn't wear red, red was a putana's colour, red was what whore's wore. My uncle had forgotten all that in free America.

I used to try it on in my bedroom late at night, once I was sure my brother was asleep. I could see my reflection when I opened the wardrobe mirror, the door of the wardrobe, right open so the hinge cracked and if there was a good moon. Gazed at myself for hours. I was only sixteen, I used to kiss the glass pretending I was my own first boy. Do all young girls kiss a mirror? I must ask Lucy sometime.

When you first kissed me, it wasn't French kissing for me, it was the glass becoming warm.

Anyway, by the time I was old enough to be allowed the colour I decided it didn't suit me anyway. Sometimes I wonder what happened to that dress because we went back to Glasgow just after. Domestic science college for a year and then I got married. Can you imagine our food being called domestic science? (act II, scene I, pp. 26-7)

The red dress from Elena's story has become a metaphor for the awakening of a young girl's sexuality. Trying the red dress on at night and kissing a mirror are the images of the girl's sexual fantasies that have to be kept clandestine because they are not deemed morally appropriate by the austere pious Italian community. In order to be free to fantasise, Elena must ensure that her brother is asleep. A woman's sexuality is removed from the public sphere; it is shown as something shameful, something that cannot be expressed in daylight and in front of men. From Elena's story it can be deduced that while growing up she has learnt to accept this, and that, in her refusal of red colour, because 'it didn't suit [her] anyway',⁸⁸ there is a trace of resignation.

However, when Elena mentions that sometimes she wonders what has become of the dress, she implies that there has always been an amount of uneasiness on her part about the lifestyle that has been imposed on her. She touches upon that point in her conversation with Stefano.

ELENA. (...) I don't understand you all anymore. You've got your own families, your own lives. I lived for my boys, that's the way it was done then, right or wrong. Your children kept you going, they were your pride, they kept you alive. All closed up with your children. Private. Your father would go off to the shop and make the money and I did my part of the bargain. That was the deal, right or wrong. It's a life that makes you shy if you're not shy already. It doesn't make you a cabbage or dowdy or drab, it doesn't make you an idiot, but what it does is turn everything outside the front door into a different territory. I'm probably not putting it very well. It makes everything outside seem foreign, a different country. (act II, scene i, p. 29)

This can be interpreted as a candid evaluation of a woman's alienation from the public sphere. She feels that a part of her was forsaken a long time ago, and that any attempt to bring it back has been hampered first by her husband, and later by her sons. She sees her affair with Davide as a chance to bring some of her dreams back to life. Davide himself comments on this when he says that by buying her a scarlet blouse he has 'red-dress[ed] the balance of history'.⁸⁹

Evaristi uses the imagery of mirrors to emphasise Elena's perception of herself, as opposed to the men's perception of what she is supposed to be:

ELENA. (...) I used to try [the dress] on in my bedroom late at night, once I was sure my brother was asleep. I could see my reflection when I opened the wardrobe mirror, the door of the wardrobe, right open so the hinge cracked and if there was a good moon. Gazed at myself for hours. I was only sixteen, I used to kiss

the glass pretending I was my own first boy. Do all young girls kiss a mirror? I must ask Lucy sometime.
 When you first kissed me, it wasn't French kissing for me, it was the glass becoming warm. (...) (act II, scene i, p. 26)

The woman's identity has been refashioned according to the needs of the patriarchal society to the extent that her true nature is seen as unacceptable and shameful, and needs to be hidden. Elena looks at herself in the mirror clandestinely, at night, when everybody else is asleep. Her true nature has become a dream, a pretence, a reflection in the mirror. The feelings that the affair with Davide has awakened in her reverse this, and the reflection in the mirror becomes the reality - for the first time she sees her life from the perspective of her own needs and desires instead of those belonging to the men around her.

Evaristi brings into the story an image of a sleeping beauty who has been awakened from her sleep by a beautiful young prince. There is an irony in this, for the sleeping beauty has been asleep for a hundred years. With her wicked humour Evaristi alludes to the age difference between the two lovers, the issue upon which the play's conflict is concentrated.

No matter how much Elena wishes to change, she is at the same time afraid of what this change might bring with it. Lucy draws her attention to the fact that her decision to change is blemished by self-doubt and self-demeaning:

ELENA. My New Year resolution is going to be this. I'm going to start speaking my mind much more, and I'm going to please myself much more. Not at the expense of anyone's feelings and not so that I become a selfish person, I wouldn't want to become cruel. (act I, scene i, p. 9)

What Elena does not realise is that freedom cannot be gained through selflessness; this renders paradoxical her unwillingness to burn the bridges behind her. Her sense of freedom is the freedom restrained by her fear and by her sons' fear of change since this change would challenge the traditional values by which they have been brought up and which imply that 'the male is always superior to the female'.⁹⁰ Even Davide, who helps Elena develop into an independent and sexual being, tries to shape her according to his needs:

DAVIDE. I don't see why you bother anyway, what's wrong with hair on your legs. I think it's a stupid idea that women's legs are less attractive just because -

ELENA. (*Shouting.*) I don't give a damn if you think it's stupid, it makes me feel better. I think it feels nicer. I don't tell you you're stupid for not growing a beard so just shut up about it, I'll let the hair grow really long and you can stay up all night stroking my pelt, you can spray, you can make pig-tails, you can go to hell! (*They begin to laugh, embrace.*)

DAVIDE. I'm sorry. Of course, you must please yourself. (act I, scene iii, p. 25)

The issue here is about taking control of one's own body and life. By focusing on Elena's self-doubt, and the clash between her desires and her sons' normative perception of what a mother's role should entail, Evaristi seeks to explore this issue which she has already touched upon in her earlier plays. Namely, she wishes to explore the process of the emotional development of a woman into an independent self-contained individual in the face of a male-dominated society which seeks to contain her within the role of a wife and a mother, as well as the reactions of those around her with regard to her development. The depiction of Elena's change against the background of Glaswegian-Italian community, whose conservatism she has camped

up, enables her to show clichéd situations and attitudes in their extremes. By doing so she creates potentially comical situations to counterbalance the plot's sensationalism which might drive it into the realm of melodrama. The above quotation shows how Evaristi uses the argument about an insignificant detail, such as whether women should wax their legs or not, to describe something much more complex, namely whether women are in control of their bodies and lives or not, and how much free choice they are truly given.

At the end of the play Elena makes a decision to stay with her family rather than leave with her lover. Evaristi argues that any other ending would take the play into the realm of a fairytale where the princess gets her prince. Elena's love for Davide, a young Italian teacher, and her relationship with her sons and daughters-in-law are important but not central to the story. It is Elena's personal growth that interests Evaristi most, while the other characters have become the vehicles of bringing about Elena's change. After the sons have expressed resistance to her and Davide's relationship, Elena is faced with the choice whether to return to Glasgow or remain in exile with Davide. Cesare's death forces her to go back, and Davide's affection proves inconstant. The last scene sees her back in her Glasgow house, but this time she is not alone. Her daughter-in-law Gianna has moved in with her, allegedly because she and her daughter could not bear to live on their own after Cesare's death, and Stefano's frequent visits have assumed a fatherly protective tone. Elena's character has developed through her experience, and she is quite a different person at the end of the play. The new Elena is much stronger; there is not a shadow of self-doubt left in her down-to-earth reasoning and dry humour. For example, she does the tapestry of

'Wreck of the Hesperus' in red, an act of quiet rebellion against an ordered world around her. In Elena's character Evaristi has found a valid medium to show how much more attractive an independent spirit is than a needy spirit. In her own words:

when [one gets] needy nobody wants to know because [one's] emanating this fill up every gap in [one's] spirit feeling which is a pretty turn-off and then as [one gets] more together, more independent, they enjoy [one's] company, they fall madly in love with [one] and [one falls] down the next hole.⁹¹

The idea of dependence does not pertain solely to Elena's character, for it is to some extent evident in all of the characters in the play. Elena's daughters-in-law, Gianna and Lucy, are examples of that. Gianna is completely immersed in her role as a wife and a mother, to the point that it is difficult to perceive her as anything else. She follows the societal norms closely, and makes judgments of other people based on those norms. Although Evaristi gives her comic properties, for example, initially Gianna refuses to go to Davide's flat because she does not wish to see her mother-in-law's improper behaviour, and decides to wait for them in a nearby cafe instead. However, later, she shows up at the flat saying that '[she] can't stand sitting in places by [herself] (...) [because] there's a limit to the number of espressos even an Italian person can drink'.

⁹² On another occasion, when Elena confesses that she often makes gaffes, Gianna claims that 'that's something [she's] never aware of doing', ⁹³ a statement that will procure giggles from both the characters and the audience, since she is in the habit of always saying the wrong things at the wrong time. But although Evaristi allows humour born out of mediocrity to emulate from Gianna, there is also a tragic element in her character. She is incapable of standing on her own, and following her husband's death, she and her daughter move to Elena's house. There is a hint that Gianna wishes

to be close to Elena so as to prevent any further contact with Davide. That might well be true, however, it is also true that Gianna has undertaken the role of a mourning widow, an image which covets attention and support which she seeks to find in Elena's company.

Lucy seems to be a stronger, more independent character at first. Cesare constantly admires her work and the initiative that she has shown by leaving her safe middle-class existence in America and coming to Scotland to share in Stefano's erratic lifestyle. She is the only person who gives Elena unconditional support. On the basis of this one might assume that she has already achieved the things for which Elena is still striving. However, in the second part of the play, as the cracks in her marriage with Stefano begin to show, her vulnerable side springs to the surface. In her final conversation with Elena, she discloses the reasons why she has to leave: Stefano's dependency suffocates her and it overlaps with her own need to depend on someone else. She has not got the strength to be 'somebody out there stone cold sober in gumboots looking for [a little boy lost]'.⁹⁴

Similar to her daughters-in-law, Elena's two sons also offer a good example of the issue of dependency which Evaristi discusses in the play. Although both of them are already in their thirties, emotionally they are locked away in their childhood. Stefano constantly refuses to accept that he has failed as an actor and as a husband, and Cesare has an compulsive need to be accepted by everybody, and is obsessed with trains. Both of them are struggling to come to terms with their identity. Stefano has become an actor, a profession which enables him to escape from himself and become someone

else for a while. His constant infidelities and aloofness derive from the same source, and as his attempts to assume the role of protector of the family fail. At the end of the play he is revealed as a weak and insecure person who returns to the family nest every time life outside becomes unbearable. In the last scene, Stefano shows up in Elena's garden after having found out that Lucy has decided to leave him. His monologue is in a way a summing-up of the common attitudes and ideologies of a Scottish Italian Catholic community, but it also probes deeper to reveal their inconsistencies. Elena is in the garden, dressed in her late husband's dinner jacket:

STEFANO. What are you doing out in the garden? You'll catch your death. Lucy's leaving me Mamma. I'll tell you about it tomorrow. S'funny I feel quite calm, quite understanding. I don't think I was ever really the marrying kind. I can't blame her. Maybe I'll feel different in the morning, when the pain hits me, but right now... just inevitable... never been pipe and slippers. Not that she wanted pipe and slippers. No idea what she wanted really. Nomadic life acting, can't drag the nest along with you on a string. Don't get upset. You don't mind if I stay the night? Felt like coming home. 'Sfunny me not throwing a bender about it. (*Stares at her.*) What the fuck are you wearing? Sorry, Mamma. (*Goes to her and hugs her from behind.*) Maybe I just can't find anyone to match my Mammy. (*Kisses her head.*) Night night... (*Disappears into the house.*) (act II, scene ii, p. 38)

There is no interaction, only a gush of words on Stefano's behalf. He does not stop and wait to hear what she thinks about the information he is providing; he is either not interested or afraid of what real communication might reveal. Elena does not interrupt him, not even when questions are directed at her. It seems as if Stefano has assumed the command of language, and Elena has been silenced. However, Evaristi makes her readers/audience observe what is beneath silence. While Elena remains wordless, her viewpoint can be read from Stefano's own speech, and a gradual change in his attitude.

In the beginning of his speech Stefano sounds calm and completely in control. He reprimands his mother for being in the garden in cold weather, and his remarks sound quite paternal, even patronizing. Gradually, he loses control of his language by trying to justify why Lucy is leaving him. He sounds less sure of himself until finally he breaks down and becomes a helpless little boy from Elena's nursery rhyme. The moment he feels that his false confidence is breaking down, he disappears into the house so as not to engage in interaction in which he might lose the dominant position.

It is evident from the characters' interaction that the male characters tend to intrude into the female conversation in order to assume the central position in it. An example of this is a kitchen scene in the first part of the play, where Gianna, Lucy and Elena's conversation is intruded upon by Cesare and Stefano.

ELENA. Oh, c'mon, Gianna, we're only talking.
Anyway, I'm the worst gaffe maker in the world.

GIANNA. Nonsense, Mamma, your social manners are
nothing short of perfect.

ELENA. Gianna, the things I say without realising! I'm
always making terrible gaffes.

LUCY. Me too. Foot-in-the-mouth Lucy, my
brother used to call me.

GIANNA. Truthfully - I can say that's something I'm
never aware of doing.

(Enter CESARE and STEFANO.)

CESARE. Did you think we'd abandoned you?

ELENA. Of course not! Abandon me!

CESARE. Have I told a joke?

ELENA. Right - where's the whisky?

STEFANO. *(Hugging LUCY.)* What a funny Hogmanay for
you! There's actually meant to be a tall dark stranger first footing
and he should bring whisky and a piece of coal and a bun. Ah -
Italian Hogmanay! You get stuffed full of pasta and pollo alla
cacciatore and wine, and then we all remember just in time and
manage down to a finger of whisky before the bells. And nobody
knows the words to 'Auld Lang Syne'.

CESARE. You just know the words to 'Auld Lang Syne' because you did panto in Motherwell. You got paid to learn the words.

ELENA. I will have you know, Stefanino mio, that the whiskies I serve are not so much a finger as a fist!

STEFANO. I just said that so you'd pour me a big one.

ELENA. I'll give you a big one. I'll give you a bunch of fives.

(...)

STEFANO. Oh, Ces, the restraint is deafening. Sort of imploded opera.

CESARE. Sorry, don't know what that means. Excuse my ignorance.

GIANNA. It's funny you know, Lucy, I've never had a chip on my shoulder about being Italian.

CESARE. My brother the actor playing Tony the Tally.

(...) (act I, scene i, pp. 10-11)

While alone, the women are talking about themselves, and the tone of their conversation follows the pattern of acknowledging the others' speech and building upon it. Hirschman (1973) has already established that this pattern 'rather than disputing the other person's utterance, implies a pattern of bonding'.⁹⁵ However, once the men join them, the tone changes and becomes more competitive and more similar to the single-gendered speeches among the men, who '[tend] to argue with each other'.⁹⁶ Also, with the men intruding into the women's dialogue, its focus shifts on to them, so that even when the women speak they speak about the men. In this way, Cesare and Stefano become the subjects of the conversation, simultaneously turning the women into the objects or even the tools by which they are discussed. In most of the cases - such as the bathroom scene between Elena and Davide in the second part, in the scene in which Stefano, Lucy and Gianna appear in Davide's flat to take Elena home, in Stefano's last speech, or in any interaction between Stefano and Lucy - it is clear that the men do not converse with women, but talk to them, or rather at them. When Lucy tries to defend Elena's motives and actions, for example, she is repeatedly

told that she is rude. In the first act of the play Stefano is reluctant to leave Elena on her own and go to the friends' Christmas party, and he offers to stay. Lucy disagrees with him and says that if his mother 'didn't want [them] to go she would say', ⁹⁷ upon which Stefano overreacts and scolds his wife for being 'bloody rude'. ⁹⁸ In the second act, Gianna echoes his words when she reproaches Lucy for defending Elena's affair with Davide. In this case, Gianna assumes a male voice. She becomes an advocate of a kind of a morality based on the traditional values which have been introduced and perpetuated by the male-dominated community. In both cases, Lucy has been judged for voicing her opinions; in this way even verbal fluency has been evaluated differently according to the speaker's gender. Gall et al (1969) suggested that for women 'verbal fluency [has] a negative correlation with "good impression"' ⁹⁹ unlike in men. By silencing a woman's voice or giving it male properties, the woman's perspective on the story has been gradually and systematically undermined and substituted by the male perspective.

While any interaction between Stefano and Elena, or Lucy, is reduced to a one way communication, since he never listens to what either of them is actually telling him, his interaction with Cesare is a constant competition for dominance. Hirschman comments on this type of interaction and relates it to a different kind of bonding 'through verbal dueling'. ¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, Stefano resents Cesare's patronising tone and the fact that while he is still a struggling actor, his elder brother has already achieved business success. On the other hand, Cesare envies his brother his easy-go lucky lifestyle and the fact that he spent some time in America, the country which Cesare considers to be 'il paradiso del'piccola Italia'.

Throughout the play Cesare boasts about his Italian origin, disregarding the fact that when he was a boy he changed his name in order to be accepted by the local Scottish community, a small detail of which Stefano is ever so eager to remind him. Cesare defends his act in terms of a matter of survival:

CESARE. Well, you try being five years old in a Glasgow school and introducing yourself as Cesare Caesar. God Almighty I'd have been dead by dinner time. Harry was the first name I thought of when I walked through the gates (...) (act I, scene i, p. 6)

Evaristi ridicules Stefano and Cesare's exaggerated sense of ethnic belonging by opposing them to Davide, a young Italian teacher from Bologna. When Stefano and Gianna call upon Elena's sense of propriety and talk about her affair with Davide as demeaning to both herself and the family (a cliché for traditional Italian family honour), Davide discloses the falsity of their national feeling:

DAVIDE. (...) What century are you people living in? Italy has moved on a bit, or haven't you noticed? I just wanted to tell you that, Steven before you tried to avenge your mother's honour. D'you ever look at this country you visit for one month and then mythologise for the rest of the year? You're like creatures from a time capsule! You're so busy looking to your own good name, that the world, Scotland, Italy, Milwaukee, progresses unnoticed. (act II, scene ii, p. 30)

The memory of Italy that they perpetuate is the memory of the past. In their attempt to glorify their roots they have derooted themselves. Having placed themselves between the two different worlds, they made it impossible to achieve belonging to either of the worlds, and turned themselves into 'creatures from a time capsule', ¹⁰¹

obsolete and ludicrous. The falsity of their national feeling can be compared with the falsity of the language which they use. Most of the characters in the play, with the exception of Davide and Lucy, use a mixture of Glaswegian and Italian, often spoken by the Glaswegian Italians of the second generation. In several instances in the play Evaristi indicates the inconsistencies which spring from their inadequate knowledge of the Italian language. For example, Cesare, Gianna and Stefano constantly refer to Scottish people as Scotchese. At one point Lucy suggests that the pronunciation should be 'Scozzese'.¹⁰² Furthermore, they either speak English with an Italian accent, or mispronounce English words to make them sound Italian such as in 'Mamma'¹⁰³ instead of 'Mum', 'Italiani'¹⁰⁴ instead of 'Italians', 'fish ana chipsa'¹⁰⁵ instead 'fish and chips', 'famiglia'¹⁰⁶ instead of 'family', etc., or they throw in certain Italian words in their statements, such as 'piazza',¹⁰⁷ 'signora',¹⁰⁸ 'pollo alla cacciatore',¹⁰⁹ 'prosciutto',¹¹⁰ 'stranieri',¹¹¹ 'patria',¹¹² 'poverino',¹¹³ 'babo',¹¹⁴ etc. Often they place English endings on Italian words such as 'bambini's bicycles'.¹¹⁵ All of this is an indication of their mixed feeling about their identities. As Davide commented, in their eagerness to belong to both worlds, they have failed to notice and accept changes in either of them.

Notwithstanding the fact that the use of this peculiar mixture of Italian-Scottish hybrid language and accent enables Evaristi to create comic situations and allows her characters space for gags and gaffes of a rather burlesque nature, she carefully avoids turning them into caricatures. *Commedia's* protagonists can be seen as funny, even foolish, but they are not clowns. They are reflections of ordinary people who are forced to deal with a crisis situation which has reached boiling point. *Commedia*

stands out among Evaristi's plays as a *bona fide* attempt by its author to show an anatomy of disintegration in an Italian-Scottish family and to disclose its traditional values and ideologies as being seriously flawed.

Notes.

Chapter Four - Scold's Bridles and Broken Myths: Reinterpretation of Gender Roles and Language (Mis)communication in Three Plays by Marcella Evaristi

¹ Interview with Marcella Evaristi, conducted by the author of this study in Glasgow on 19 February 1997, pp. 3-4.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

⁸ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 205.

⁹ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces* (St. Andrews: Crawford Centre for the Arts, University of St. Andrews, 1980), p. 25.

¹⁰ Amy Sheldon, 'Pickle Fights: Gendered Talk in Preschool Disputes' in *Gender and Conversational Interaction* (ed.) Deborah Tannen (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1993), p. 84.

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Deborah Cameron, p. 205.

¹³ Deborah Cameron, p. 187.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 204.

¹⁵ Idem.

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹ Idem.

²⁰ Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language* (London, New York: Longman, 1993), p. 9.

²¹ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 4.

²² Ibid., p. 16.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

²⁵ Dale Spender, *Man-Made Language* (London, Boston, Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 58.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁹ *The Holy Bible* (London: Coldstream, Robert Kerr for The Free Bible Press Co., 1847), pp. 1063-4).

³⁰ *The Holy Bible*, p. 1063.

³¹ Ibid., p. 1064.

³² The Gospel According to S. Luke (10:41) in *The Holy Bible*, p. 1025.

³³ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 9.

³⁴ Deborah Tannen, *Gender and Conversational Interaction*, p. 149.

³⁵ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 15-6.

³⁶ Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand* (London: Virago Press, 1992), p. 77.

³⁷ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 1.

³⁸ Donna Eder, 'Go Got Ya a French!: Romantic and Sexual Teasing Among Adolescent Girls' in *Gender and Conversational Interaction* (ed.) Deborah Tannen, p. 18.

³⁹ Dale Spender, *Man-Made Language*, p. 190.

⁴⁰ Idem.

⁴¹ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 20.

⁴² Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand*, p. 32.

⁴³ Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ Idem.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

- 47 Idem.
- 48 Sherry Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' in Michele Zimbali Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, *Culture and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 82.
- 49 Idem.
- 50 Marcella Evaristi, *Mouthpieces*, p. 23.
- 51 Joyce McMillan, 'Women Playwrights in Scottish Theatre', Chapman 43-4: Scottish Theatre Today, Spring 1986, vol. viii, no. 6, pp. 69-77.
- 52 Ibid., p. 74.
- 53 Ibid., p. 73.
- 54 Idem.
- 55 Idem.
- 56 Barbara Johnstone in *Gender and Conversational Interaction* (ed.) Deborah Tannen (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 69-70.
- 57 Idem.
- 58 Idem.
- 59 Marcella Evaristi, *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses*, manuscript.
- 60 Ibid., p. 1.
- 61 Ibid., p. 5.
- 62 Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand* (London: Virago Press, 1992), p. 77.
- 63 Idem.
- 64 Marcella Evaristi, *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses*, p. 5.
- 65 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
- 66 Idem.
- 67 Michele Barrett, 'Feminist scholarship and the social construction of woman' in Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn (eds.) *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (Methuen: London and New York, 1985), p. 3.
- 68 Marcella Evaristi, *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses*, p. 16.
- 69 Idem.
- 70 Ibid., p. 45.
- 71 Ibid., p. 43.
- 72 Ibid., p. 48.
- 73 Ibid., p. 50.
- 74 Idem.
- 75 Ibid., p. 70.
- 76 Idem.
- 77 Interview with Marcella Evaristi, p. 5.
- 78 Marcella Evaristi, *Commedia* (Edinburgh: The Salamander Press, 1983), p. 14.
- 79 Ibid., p. 29.
- 80 Idem.
- 81 Idem.
- 82 Idem.
- 83 Idem.
- 84 Ibid., p. 26.
- 85 Ibid., p. 14.
- 86 Idem.
- 87 Ibid., p. 26.
- 88 Ibid., p. 27.
- 89 Idem.
- 90 Helene Wandor, *Carry On Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* (London, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 13.
- 91 Interview with Marcella Evaristi, p. 14.
- 92 Marcella Evaristi, *Commedia*, p. 29.
- 93 Ibid., p. 13.
- 94 Ibid., p. 36.
- 95 Hirschman in *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (eds.) Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (Massachusetts: Newsbury Hse Publishers Inc., 1975), p. 24.
- 96 Idem.
- 97 Marcella Evaristi, *Commedia*, p. 13.
- 98 Idem.

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- ⁹⁹ Gall et al (1969) quoted in *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*, p. 27.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hirschman quoted in *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*, p. 27.
- ¹⁰¹ Marcella Evaristi, *Commedia*, p. 30.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹¹² *Idem.*
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Chapter Five

Girls, Women and Mothers: Recognition and Acceptance in Three Plays by Sharman Macdonald

5.1. *About the playwright*

Sharman Macdonald was born in Glasgow on 8 February 1953. After graduating from Edinburgh University she began an acting career but soon gave it up in order to write. Her first play, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* won the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright of 1984. The play premiered at the Bush Theatre, London, in November 1984, and was later performed at the Edinburgh International Festival and in the West End. Her other plays include *The Brave* (produced at the Bush Theatre), *When We Were Women* (a National Theatre Studio commission produced at the Cottesloe and the Edinburgh International Festival, 1988), *All Things Nice* (produced by the Royal Court Theatre, directed by Max Stafford Clark, 1991), *Shades* (produced in the West End and directed by Simon Callow, 1992), *The Winter Guest* (a West Yorkshire Playhouse/Almeida Theatre co-production commissioned and directed by Alan Rickman, 1995), *Borders of Paradise* (Lou Stein's farewell production at Watford, nominated for the TMA Best Regional Play Award, 1995), and *Sea Urchins* (produced by Catherine Bailey Ltd and directed for BBC Radios 3 and 4, which won a Sony Award for Best Drama in 1997, staged at Dundee Repertory Theatre, 1998). Her film work includes *Wild Flowers* (a Channel Four Film) and *The Winter Guest* (directed by Alan Rickman, starring Emma Thompson and Phyllida Law). Her opera work includes *Hey Persephone!* (produced

by Jonathan Reekie with music by Deirdre Gribbin for the Aldeburgh Festival and the Almeida Opera Season). Macdonald has also written the novels *The Beast* and *Night, Night* (Collins) and *Sharman Macdonald Plays One* (Faber and Faber, 1995), shortlisted for the McVities Scottish Writer of the Year Award.

5.2. *About this chapter*

Macdonald left Scotland in the early stages of her career, after the Traverse Theatre turned down her first play: as she primarily writes for the English stage, the Scottishness that seeps from her plays is more of an implication than a statement. Although some of her characters speak a loose form of Scots and the action of her plays is often set in the familiar environment of east Scotland, the Scottishness of language has been watered down to meet the requirements of an English audience and the environment has been distorted to such an extent that it may invite reinterpretation and indeed a relocation, which may further incite redefinition of the characters. By fragmenting individual experiences Macdonald creates an abstract environment which allows them a kind of universality. The protagonists in her plays are in search of possible ways of reconciliation of their individual sense of identity in everyday situations. Macdonald's plays may be looked upon as plays of recognition and acceptance rather than of ongoing self-discovery; they are based in the past rather than the present, and they reflect the consequences that the past actions have had on individuals rather than lead towards a resolution of a conflict. Since conflict is mostly internalised in Macdonald's plays, in the sense that it is placed in the characters' minds, they have often been considered less theatrical and more discursive than the work of

other four authors discussed in this study, which might have been partly the reason why it took so long for them to be produced on the stage. Indeed, out of the five playwrights discussed in this study, Macdonald's plays involve the least physical action. However, their structure holds a powerful metaphoric and visual potential which is simultaneously detailed and allusive. Such is the strength of elements of evocation and mystique in them that Benedict Nightingale chooses to compare them to 'a Nordic tone-poem or a pre-Impressionist painting [rather] than with drama as it is usually defined'.¹

Macdonald's writing has frequently been labelled as autobiographical. She is uncomfortable with this assumption. According to her, she '[does not] make things up. What [she] put[s] on the stage never happened in fact but all comes from somewhere in life'.² Similar to Munro, Macdonald is interested in showing how women are affected by different choices. Like their author, they belong to the new generation of women who no longer accept traditional gender roles. These are strong-willed, independent women who have learnt that it is possible to walk away and change one's life if one sets one's mind to it. This sense of empowerment is reflected in Macdonald's reminiscences about her own childhood and the school system in Scotland:

The educational system in Scotland is different, I went to school in Glasgow and then in Edinburgh, and these particular schools were extremely academic. There was no thought that women could not do certain things. The girls I went to school with, we were all being educated to be writers, doctors, lawyers, engineers. My father wanted me to be an engineer. It never occurred to me that any career would be impossible for me.³

There is no hint in this statement of any indication that women have been impeded from achieving their goals by a dominant patriarchal culture, no political message that there is a subtle gender war going on in her plays and that the issues that she deals with have been part of feminist literary thought for the past thirty years. If Macdonald's work is referred to as feminist with caution, it is because it belongs to the postfeminist era. The confessional tone of Lochhead's early heroines and the brash, loud-mouthed, rage-driven Amazons of Evaristi's plays can be seen to reflect the key strategies of second wave feminism, as suggested by Ann Brooks in her book *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms* (1997), which were intended 'to expose the nature of "patriarchy" and "oppression" and to establish "women only spaces", new patterns of relationships between women through the practice of consciousness raising'.⁴ Macdonald's characters, on the contrary, are far removed from these patterns. They move towards the postulates of post-feminism, which include challenging the 'model of male domination' which represent women as 'oppressed', 'silenced' by men, and developing the 'model of pluralism' which would highlight the possibility of construction of multiple representations and re-examine 'social constructedness' of both female and male feminisms. In other words, she has removed herself from the male/powerful vs. female/powerless debate, and towards rejecting the concepts of 'patriarchy' and 'oppression' as obscure and misleading. In her plays, male characters are portrayed as weak, and as much in need of re-examining their identities and finding their space as the female ones - all of them, regardless of gender - are represented as both products and victims of socialisation. The germ of such approach has already been seen in Glover's depiction of Aeneas in *The Straw Chair*, Lochhead's Byron, a cynical anti-hero in *Blood and Ice*, or the male characters

in Evaristi's plays, who feel increasingly uneasy about the ways in which patriarchy has shaped their masculinities. If Macdonald's plays, and indeed the plays of other women playwrights explored here, contain elements of post-feminism, then it is a post-feminism as defined by Yeatman (1994),⁵ as the representation of 'pluralisms and difference' beyond gender concerns second wave feminism has focused on, and not as 'the backlash', a reactionary response to second wave feminism, as suggested by Susan Faludi.⁶

The days when women authors struggled to bring forward women's experience in contemporary society as an acceptable and an accepted topic in the theatre are gone, and today a number of reputable authors, both female and male, have developed multiple voices in order to express unique experiences of gender, race and class-based minority groups. Considering the milieu of Scottish theatre in the past thirty years, authors such as Glover, Lochhead and Evaristi began increasingly to bring women's experience and voice in theatre, and the playwrights of the middle generation such as Macdonald and Munro might be seen as the beneficiaries of that process. In other words, while the first generation was engaged in exploration of new themes and styles, the second generation has recorded and further developed those experiences. In her plays Macdonald deals with the same issues as the previous three authors; however, in her case the emphasis is not on the conflict but on the possibilities for reconciliation and acceptance of one's situation. In Macdonald's world there are no enemies outside one's own mind and her protagonists grapple with their own ghosts in order to enable the healing process to begin.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how Macdonald uses imagery and discourse in dealing with themes such as a woman's position in society, a woman's perception of gender identity, the interactions of women with other protagonists (Macdonald is primarily interested in the relationships between women, i. e. friends, mother-daughter relationships etc.), a woman's sexuality and possibility of self-expression and self-assertion through creation. These four themes are joined by another issue that recurs in Macdonald's writing, her characters' constant preoccupation with death. The analysis will be based on three of Macdonald's plays, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, *When We Were Women* and *The Winter Guest*.

5.3. *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* (1984)

Macdonald's debut play *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*⁷ tells about the lives of three Scottish women of different generations and reflects on 'motives that govern the decision for or against marriage, childbearing or abortion'.⁸ The play is set in summer 1983, at the time when Fiona and her mother Morag return to spend a day at the beach in the part of the town where they used to live between 1955 and 1966. Unknown to her daughter, Morag has also invited Fiona's childhood friend Vari, and this encounter sends Fiona on a trip down memory lane in the course of which she will be forced to come face to face with the consequences of her past actions. The relationships between the three women are seen through Fiona's eyes as she reminisces about a series of events which occurred between 1955 and 1966, during her childhood and early teen years, which had direct influence on her later life. However, Macdonald fragments both the storyline and the characters to such an extent that it is quite

impossible to fit Fiona into the role of a traditional narrator of the story and, although the entire action is seen through her eyes, she does not comment on either past or present events. Instead, she acts more like a recorder, or a photographer, of her own and the other characters' experiences. By means of such fragmentation Macdonald avoids unnecessary judgment of the rightness or wrongness of the choices that her female characters make, and instead she concentrates on their differences.

Peter Zenzinger maintains that through the depiction of Fiona and Morag's turbulent relationship, Macdonald shows a stark contrast 'between the traditional view of what constitutes fulfillment in a woman's life and the modern woman's wish for self-determination'.⁹ Morag has embraced the notion that a woman's role in society consists of her duty to her husband and children. Dressed in a Marks and Spencer's flower-patterned dress, sporting impeccable make-up and hairstyle, boasting about her gardening experience and trying to feed everyone on her home-made sandwiches, she is an embodiment of the traditional model of the feminine. She cannot comprehend the woman's role outside the domestic sphere, and regards her daughter as a failure due to her not having secured a man, a child and money.

MORAG.	(...) You're thirty-two and you've not got a child. That's sad.
FIONA.	I don't want one.
MORAG.	Rubbish.
FIONA.	I don't.
MORAG.	Every woman wants a child.
FIONA.	Not me. (act I, scene ii, p. 29)

For Morag, marriage and motherhood are the essence of a woman's being, not an option. They are perceived as the woman's duties which must be performed even to

the extent of self-effacement. The sexual act, which she sees as a sin, is part of those duties that needs to be endured obediently for the purpose of procreation, and avoided as often as possible after that purpose has been fulfilled. In her attitude to sex there is an idea, perpetuated by the patriarchal ideology, that women, unlike men, are asexual beings, and that any sexual desire on the part of the female is unacceptable and indeed unnatural.

MORAG. That's dirty. Your father was like an elephant, if he got it once in ten years he could consider himself lucky. So he went. I could never see anything in it. (act I, scene ii, p. 29)

When talking to her daughter about sex, Morag uses terms from religious parlance, constantly referring to God, angels and duties. There is a hint of regret in her words about the ways in which the subject has been dealt with on television. Still, any regret that she might have is hidden beneath the traditional ideology with which she has been brought up, and which has been one of the main reasons why Morag's relationships with both her husband and her lover failed. Long after her husband left her, she was given another chance in the form of a lover who wanted to marry her and take her with him to the Far East where he had been offered a job in the oil industry. Morag refused this chance when she chose duty instead of her personal happiness, and left her lover for the sake of her pregnant teenage daughter. In other words, she opted out of sexual love in favour of motherly love, and transferred all of her passion into the only aim in life which she felt was left to her, or rather belonged to her, that of having a grandchild of her own. Being denied this, at first through Fiona's having her illegitimate son adopted, and later through her rejection of a mother's role, Morag finds consolation in fussing over insignificant details and meticulously carrying out domestic duties, as

Fiona points out when she says that her mother 'cares passionately about everything. Life and a ham sandwich. It all has the same importance'.¹⁰

Fiona stands in direct opposition to her mother; she is an embodiment of a 'modern woman' as Zenzinger defines her. Vari describes her as an attractive thirty-two year old woman with a taut face, high cheek-bones, and make-up in the corner of her eyes. However, she is also an independent, outspoken and articulate, college-educated feminist-oriented young woman, a truly appropriate representative of the new generation of women to whom Macdonald has referred when speaking about her Scottish education. Vari describes her as 'a member of CND and some left-wing political group with militant affiliations and pacifist intent [who wears] dungarees, speak[s] harsh words of men and belong[s] to a feminist encounter group where [they] look up [their] genitals with a mirror'.¹¹ Although Macdonald is here making fun of radical feminism, she is far from denouncing the entire women's liberation movement as trivial. On the contrary, her depiction of Fiona's character is that of an alternative to the traditional concept of the feminine as being primarily a wife and a mother.

Besides Morag, Vari is another character whom Macdonald creates according to the traditional concept of the feminine. Both characters have conformed to traditional gender roles and are depicted as asexual beings whose need for a relationship with men is based on companionship rather than sex. Like Morag, Vari voices her dislike of sex on several occasions during the play. She does so through straightforward comments or through hints, such as when, following Fiona and Morag's squabble about a jellyfish, she says, 'Slugs, worms and jellyfish. I hate them'.¹² Slugs, worms, jellyfish

and snakes are universally established metaphors for the male genitals and, both in *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* and in *When We Were Women*, Macdonald makes the point of using them extensively. Apart from employing such generally understood and accepted metaphors, she also uses a more personalised image of a coat so as to comment on male sexual prowess. In the former play it is the black PVC raincoat on which Ewan and Fiona make love, and in the latter it is Mackenzie's military raincoat on which Isla refuses to sit. An item of male clothing thus becomes a symbol of male sexuality. It is sexuality stripped of its dominance. In *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, Ewan's appearance is given two distinguishing attributes - long legs and a PVC raincoat. No other physical attributes describing him are given, and in fact no other attributes are needed. The character of Ewan is never seen as equal to the female characters. He is not a subject of their story, but only an object of their desire, and later in the play he becomes a vehicle in Fiona's and Morag's struggle for control of each other's lives.

Throughout the play Macdonald offers us radically opposed attitudes to sexuality. The first attitude implies that sexuality has got male properties, while femaleness is linked with asexuality. This attitude perpetuates the concept of a sexualised woman as being loose. For example, Vari warns Fiona that an act of masturbation in a woman is a sin.

VARI. If you do that your husband'll know when you get married and he'll despise you.

FIONA. How will he know? You can't see.

VARI. If you keep doing it you go all hard inside. You go like concrete and he can't get in *to get his pleasure*. So he knows.

FIONA. Why does he want to get in?

VARI. His penis needs to. It sort of gets up and leads him to the hole and it tries to get in and if it can't the man knows it's

your fault and you get divorced. *He knows you've been dirty and no man'll live with a dirty lady. He shouldn't be expected to*, my Mum says. (act I, scene i, pp. 21-2)

The italics have been added in the above citation in order to emphasise the idea that while sexual prowess in a man is a positive characteristic, since they are able to distinguish between sex and love, their promiscuity is freed from any guilt of betrayal. However, since women are thought to be unable to distinguish between the two, a sexualised woman becomes a bearer of the stigma of betrayal. For example, when Morag scolds Fiona for 'jigging', i. e. masturbating, she uses the traditional religious images to frighten Fiona from expressing her awakening sexuality in an explicit way. She describes God as an old man with gray beard who sends good girls 'to pick the flowers in God's green meadows when [they] die', ¹³ a Recording Angel as a mediator who weeps for naughty girls, and the Devil as a snakelike creature who sticks his victims on a spit and 'roast[s] [them] in the fires of hell so he can eat [them] for dinner'. ¹⁴ God, Recording Angel and Devil are all referred to as 'he', while the Devil's victims are given female properties. Furthermore, images such as 'picking of flowers', 'snakelike', 'spit' and 'fire' carry explicit sexual connotations. On the one hand, the image of 'flowers' is often used in reference to innocence and virginity, and 'to pick flowers' symbolises an act of defloration. 'To pick flowers in God's green meadows' can then be interpreted as consummating one's marriage in accordance to the teachings of the Church. 'Snakelike' and 'spit', on the other hand, bear clear reference to the male genitals, while 'fire' can be interpreted as denoting 'orgasm'. In accordance with this interpretation, Morag's speech can be seen as the containment of the women's sexuality by traditional ideology. In another scene, Fiona refuses to participate in the 'jigging' game, initiated by Vari, and tries to convince Vari that there

are snakes in her bed. When Vari tells her that she sees no snakes, Fiona assures her that the snakes are there only for her. The symbolism of the snakes in this instance has got a double meaning of both repressed sexuality and danger of the loss of respectability and unwanted pregnancy as the possible consequences of a woman's indulgence in an extramarital sexual act.

In *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, motherhood and married life are depicted as two potentially constraining elements of female identity and sexuality. In act II, scene i, Vari refers to both.

VARI. Look at me. I'm fat. I've seen you, Fiona. You can't keep your eyes off my tummy. I strip myself at night. He's not often there so no one sees. I look at myself in the mirror. This is a mother's body. Where am I? (...) My tits have got great blue veins running across them. They look good when they're full of milk but then it's mostly running down my front so the effect it's mostly spoilt. When they're empty they're poor things. All the exercises in the world'll not save my stomach. (...) The doctor's face when I'd had Moira. He pulled out a handful of skin. I said that'll go away won't it. He let it go. Splat. He shook his head. He looked awful sad. He probably knows Archie. Felt sorry he had to make love to a doughbag for the rest of his life. I mean, I could have an operation. Archie's said already about it. They take away all the stretched-out skin. You end up looking like a hot cross bun. They cut you from here to here and up. I'd rather buy a corset. I mean, God or no God, you're asking for it if you fiddle. I mean, I'm healthy. You can have it on the National Health, the operation. Archie wouldn't compromise his principles even for the sake of his own pleasure. There's always divorce.

MORAG. What God's intended God's appointed.

FIONA. Don't say that.

VARI. Listen, it's easier if he's not there. I can handle the children. I eat what they eat. We get on fine. When he's in he enquires politely about the mess, makes requests about the level of the noise and I have to cook him dinner. It's not his fault. He's got his work. He likes a cooked breakfast too. Archie's very good to me. He lets the babies sleep in the bed with me and he goes to another room. We're lucky we have a good big house. That way he gets his sleep and I only have to turn over when they wake in the

night. Of course we don't make love but I wake up covered in milk and piss, I can do without sperm as well. (...)

FIONA. Do you miss sex?

VARI. I've read every book in existence on the female orgasm. I've never had one.

MORAG. Still. We'll get into heaven. (act II, scene i, pp. 54-5)

Several issues can be deduced from Vari's speech. Her perception of herself has been influenced by the social (predominately male) aesthetic imperatives. Vari feels uncomfortable about her appearance because it no longer corresponds to the idea of beauty as perpetuated by male-dominated cultural standards. She envies Fiona whose thin figure and taut and carefully made-up face remind her of the ideal which is expected of her but which she might have reached only if she had chosen a different lifestyle. In the play, Vari's motherhood and sexuality have become mutually exclusive properties, and in this way she has become trapped in the one-dimensional gender role which is alien to her.

It is obvious from Vari's speech that there is a clearcut labour division in her and Archie's marriage between Archie's role as the one who provides, which places him in the public arena, and Vari's role as the one who is provided for, which locks her into the domestic sphere. Vari feels that although Archie maintains domination in the public sphere, he also competes for domination in the domestic sphere, with his polite questions and constant demands. Vari does not regard her husband as responsible for her present situation. On the contrary, she defends him in terms of his being the breadwinner of the household, and simultaneously places herself in the secondary, subservient position. Although she does not consciously admit it, her description of Archie reveals a traditional authoritarian who does not share any responsibility for

childcare and domestic chores beyond a financial one, and who has assumed complete control of her life. Vari is aware that the choice that she has made is for a life of constant compromise, she is not free to do as she chooses, even on her own ground. Her husband allows her to sleep with the children, but requires her to obey domestic rules set by an absent husband. When she says that they are lucky to have a big house, she actually means that she must consider herself lucky that her husband can provide such a house for her. Her own needs remain unfulfilled regardless of the fact that she has, in her own words, read all of the books available on the subject of female orgasm. In this sense, Vari's and Morag's refusal of any intimacy may be perceived as a means of taking full control of their bodies and creating a personal space, however cramped it may be, which is not invaded by men. One may push this argument even further and propose that Vari's consent to bearing children is in a way another defense against her husband's unwanted sexual advances. In a society which observes a single independent woman with suspicion (Morag questions her daughter's decision to remain single as a possible sign of lesbianism), these two women have turned the realm of domesticity into one bastion of womanhood that man has not yet penetrated.

The other attitude to sexuality that Macdonald examines in this play is represented by Fiona who, while growing up, goes through the process of discovering that her sexuality is independent from an actual act of intercourse, and indeed from any aspect of male sexuality. She also goes through the process of renouncing both the romantic idea that suggests that a woman should save herself until the right man comes along and the prejudice that an extramarital affair brands a woman a strumpet. Macdonald subverts the stereotypical Freudian symbols of sexuality and guilt and shows their

falsity in her depiction of Fiona's sexual and intellectual development and her gradual rejection of romantic concepts of love and family which culminate in her decision to refuse Ewan's marriage offer.

FIONA. (...) Who does he think he is, with his great long legs and his manners? Stuff his manners. Stuff him. I mean, it takes two. He didn't have to. He could have said no. Stupid black PVC raincoat. He thinks he's great. He's not, he's not. I'll swim in the sea. I'll wash him all off me. He'll be nowhere. I'll wash him all out of me. He won't exist. He won't be in me. (act II, scene i, pp. 62-3)

The falsity of romantic concepts of love and family is exposed through the candid portrayal of Vari's and Fiona's growth to sexual maturity, as well as through the description of the aftermath of Morag's unsuccessful relationships. In the first instance, conversations between the two girls are given in fragmented flashbacks which show their changing attitudes towards the meaning of relationships and sex. For example, there is nothing romantic about Vari's description of her date with Ewan.

VARI. Do you want to hear? We got down here and we were holding hands and that was a bit boring. I mean, he's not a great conversationalist.

FIONA. He's got lovely legs. And a black PVC raincoat.

VARI. We sat on that. It was warm last Saturday.

FIONA. Could you smell the shit from the sewers? I never think that's very romantic. (act I, scene ii, pp. 34-5)

Vari begins her description in the same way she would, for instance, depict a school science experiment. Ewan is hardly described as a romantic hero; he is a confused, insecure young boy who fails to impress. His only credentials are his good looks, as Fiona indicates. The moment Vari's description of the weather on Saturday threatens

to become romanticised, Fiona brings her back to the reality by pointing out that their meeting place near the sewers must have been far from romantic. What is described in this instance is not the meeting of young first-time lovers, but an experiment conducted by a young girl to see how she might feel in a sexually stimulating situation. One might conclude that Vari uses Ewan in the learning process about her own sexuality, in the same way that Fiona will later use him in order to stop her mother from leaving her. In this sense, the power roles are switched and the male character becomes an object in the female gaze, and a vehicle in the process of the young women's self-discovery. This proposition may be corroborated by the fact that all of the male characters in Macdonald's plays are either enfeebled or absent. This is further in accordance with a trend in Scottish drama written by women toward portraying husbands and fathers as physically absent from the stage in order to focus on the female characters and show reality from a distinctively female perspective.

Macdonald subverts the traditional model of the eternal feminine in her description of the position of a married woman in the society. She shows how different a woman's existence as a wife and a mother is from the romanticised picture of a conventional family unit. Vari is married, with children, going through yet another pregnancy, and living a life which can hardly be described in terms of a romance. The only other glimpse of married life that Macdonald gives us is that of Morag's dysfunctional family. In one of the flashbacks, we find out from Vari's and Fiona's conversation that Morag's relationship with her former husband was doomed from the very start, when she got pregnant against his will and coaxed him into marrying her. By showing the women's dissatisfaction with their respective situations and the options that they have

been given, Macdonald overturns the common preconceptions about marriage and families as the basic social unit as maintained by dominant cultural imperatives and shows how the family unit has become a confinement for women. She reveals the double standard on which those preconceptions are based, as well as point to the need to rethink and reject this double standard in order to redefine one's identity.

The rejection of romantic notions of love and family on Fiona's part goes hand in hand with her denouncement of motherhood, in the act of giving up her own newborn baby for adoption. Macdonald steers away from an idealistic description of childbearing: for example, in act I, scene ii, Morag talks about the birth pains which had caused her initial animosity towards Fiona.

MORAG. I saw you when you were born. Two hours I was in labour with you and you ripped me right up to my bum. You came out from between my legs and your eyes were open. You knew exactly what you'd done. The midwife held you up. You looked right at me. You didn't cry. No, madam. Not you. You gave me look for look. I didn't like you then and I don't like you now. (act I, scene ii, p. 39)

Here, Macdonald is trying to put forward an important point - that motherhood and nurture are not biologically determined functions inherent to all women, as Morag has herself initially claimed. Instead, they are socially constructed and accepted by the patriarchal ideology as an appropriate attribute of the concept of the feminine. If motherhood and nurture are not biologically determined, then it would be inaccurate to take them as a basis for the definition of concepts of womanhood, the feminine and indeed female identity. If this is so, then these concepts are in need of a careful reexamination and redefinition.

Throughout the play Macdonald flirts with the notion of abortion as a possible solution to the problem of teenage pregnancy. Even now, in the 1990s, this concept is provocative enough to raise a few questions regarding the choices which women are allowed in contemporary society. For example, Fiona confesses that if pregnant she would get rid of a child, 'I think I'd rather pull the flush'.¹⁵ However, Macdonald does not address this idea further, and by the end of the play she opts for a more acceptable solution. Although the consequences of the women's choices interest her profoundly, her main objective is to analyse the relationships between her female characters. The women's choices, and their consequences, are of use to her only to the extent that they inevitably affect those relationships in one way or another.

Fiona's decision to get pregnant and subsequently abandon her baby has got nothing to do with her relationship with Ewan, or her apparent resentment of her own pregnancy, which has been completely screened off in her mind. In all three of Macdonald's plays that have been analysed in this study the relationships between men and women are often pushed aside and the main conflict is focused on the relationships between the female protagonists. Macdonald is particularly interested in the mother-daughter relationship which, in *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, develops from open rivalry to silent acceptance. It is possible to draw parallels between Morag's and Fiona's pregnancies in the sense that both of them conceived in order to achieve a goal. In Morag's case it was to keep a man, in Fiona's to obstruct her mother from leaving her and going away with her lover. There is an ongoing struggle between them

to maintain control of each other's lives. Morag feels that Fiona has transformed from the means to capture a husband into a rival for his attention.

MORAG. (...) I did everything that was proper. You'd take nothing from me. Your father took you. He dandled you and petted you. You had eyes for him all right. (...) You sat on your father's knee, you clapped his head, you could get anything you wanted. You thought you could. You thought you could. (...) (act I, scene ii, p. 40)

Macdonald's description of the nature of Morag's and Fiona's relationship with each other and with the absent husband/father bear clear Freudian connotations. The rivalry between the two female protagonists can be explained by two factors. Firstly, Fiona blames Morag for her father's departure. Secondly, Fiona sees Morag's prudishness as an impediment to her own sexual development. The actual reasons for their conflict are never openly discussed. For example, when Morag decides to come into the open and discuss her new relationship, Fiona quickly changes the subject. The result is another row between the mother and the daughter about an issue which has nothing to do with the actual crisis in their lives. There is another possible explanation for this ongoing rivalry, which is founded on Zenzinger's observation about the absence of men from the play. On the basis of this observation it is possible to hypothesise that, in the absence of strong male characters, Morag has been transformed from the role of a 'bossy mother whose callousness hides emotional crippling [into] the hardman of the traditional pattern'.¹⁶ Morag's seventeen year loneliness and the fact that after her husband's departure she raised Fiona as a single mother invites such an interpretation. This view has certain implications for the analysis of the characters' language interaction. In Chapter One of this study, the belief that women speakers use shorter,

open-ended sentences, as opposed to men who use longer utterances based on written (grammatical, standardised) languages has already been touched upon with regard to the work of, amongst others, Dale Spender, Sheila Rowbotham, Deborah Tannen and Deborah Cameron. Furthermore, it has already been established in a number of researches that men are more likely to interrupt another person's discourse than women. If these two ideas are applied to the interaction between Morag and Fiona, it is possible to observe that while Morag initiates conversation in an aggressive manner, Fiona answers in short sentences, in a defensive manner. She is also more likely to be interrupted by Morag. There is not much difference between the women's relationship at the beginning and at the end of the play, there is no visible development, nor a major transformation. Their boxing into their respective roles is illustrated in the following two extracts:

FIONA. All right, they're...
 MORAG. A wee holiday.
 FIONA. Mum...
 MORAG. You can say, 'You're all dressed up', or you can say, 'You're all dressed up'. (act I, scene i, p. 6)

and,

FIONA. I told you to...
 MORAG. See me now. Look. I knew what I'd become. I made a break for something. OK. When he came to me, Ewan. When he came to me and told me.
 FIONA. Mum, this is...
 MORAG. You listen. 'Mrs McBridie, Fiona's going to have a child. It's my child. I'm sorry, Mrs McBridie.' Oh, he was polite. I liked him. Poor wee fella. I liked him fine.
 FIONA. He was...
 MORAG. Now listen to me. I knew I had a choice. Listen. My daughter had not come to me. Do you understand that? My daughter was not asking for my help. I could see her point. Listen.

I had a choice. What if I left her enough money and I went away? Nothing mentioned between us. I knew you'd not have that child. Then you might say we'd survive, you and me. Out of the question. Fifteen and pregnant. Of course I couldn't let you alone. So. You told Ewan. So. Here we both are. Here we are.

(Pause.)

I expect you'd like an ice-cream cone. I'll walk up the prom a bit. My last walk of this holiday. I don't expect you ever will talk to me. Would you like a double 99 with raspberry sauce? That's what I'm having. My own wee treat. Will you join me? You've got to do something daft on a last day.

FIONA. That would be lovely. (act II, scene iii, pp. 81-2)

In both extracts, Morag uses the imperative mode associated with male discourse, as opposed to Fiona who uses the non-assertive mode associated with female discourse. In the latter extract Morag finally brings out into the open the crucial incident which has changed the course of their lives. However, once recognised, the issue is left undiscussed, and the final feeling is that of avoidance of conflict and acceptance of the present situation.

Morag is not the only female character in the play who is given male properties. In some of the childhood scenes Vari takes over the male role, and at those times her dominant position in dialogue is noticeable.

VARI. I'll be the man and you be the woman.

FIONA. What do I do?

VARI. Take your jammies off.

FIONA. I will not.

VARI. Shhhhh. Shhhhh. Do you want everyone to hear? It's only sensible to practise. We've got to make it as real as possible. I mean, you don't think they do it with their clothes on, do you?

FIONA. I don't know.

VARI. Well, they don't. It's only sensible. How can his thing go in you if you've got a pair of pyjamas in the way? That's what's known as contraception.

FIONA. Sorry.

VARI. I've got mine off. Hurry up.

FIONA. Ready.
 VARI. Right. I'm going to kiss your ear.
 FIONA. Why?
 VARI. That's what they do. Ready?
 FIONA. Yes.
 (...)

 VARI. (...) I'll just get on top of you.
 FIONA. No.
 VARI. Do you want to practise or not?
 FIONA. All right.
 VARI. Right. Try to just concentrate, will you. I mean you'll think we were doing something dirty.
 FIONA. Sorry.
 VARI. Right. (*Gets on top of Fiona.*) How's that? Am I heavy?
 FIONA. No. Not really.
 VARI. Do I feel nice?
 FIONA. I suppose so.
 VARI. Don't be so enthusiastic. I mean, I'm the one doing all the work.
 FIONA. Sorry. (act I, scene ii, pp. 25-7)

This conversation pattern is similar to a role-playing in a seduction game in which male resumes an aggressive, active role, while female resumes a defensive, passive role. Vari initiates the jiggling game, and dominates throughout their conversation. Also, Macdonald reminds her audience of a common prejudice maintained by the dominant ideology that a woman is not supposed to enjoy intercourse, she should not be 'so enthusiastic', ¹⁷ on the contrary, the traditional idea of a woman who considers sex to be 'dirty' ¹⁸ is touched upon. A woman's role in intercourse is that of a passive receiver, since the man is 'the one doing all the work'. ¹⁹ In act I, scene ii, Ewan says to Fiona that she is not supposed to enjoy sex because '[she] is female. Whores enjoy it'. ²⁰ This idea has already been mentioned by Morag in act I, scene ii, when she calls sex 'dirty' ²¹ and compares her husband with 'an elephant'. ²² Also, in act I, scene i, she refers to the male sexual nature as being dirty, 'always with their hands on their dirty wee things'. ²³

Once they stop role-playing, the girls' conversation pattern transforms from a dominant (male) vs. dominated (female) speech mode to being more balanced. The girls' bickering still sounds competitive, but now they are not competing for the upper place in the communicational ladder, their bickering becomes a part of their game instead.

Compared with the roles assumed by Vari and Fiona in the previous example, the conversation patterns between Fiona and Ewan before and after intercourse distinctly differ from each other. During the period of courting Ewan seems empowered, and assumes an assertive and protective posture, while Fiona plays the role of the submissive party. After intercourse, however, and particularly when he finds out that Fiona is pregnant, Ewan comes across as a confused and frightened little boy emasculated by her growing self-confidence.

Although Zenzinger's claim that the almost complete absence of adult men in her plays signifies Macdonald's 'escape from a male-dominated Scottish culture' ²⁴ may sound a little presumptuous, it is a fact that the male characters presented on the stage are mostly in their teens or otherwise weaker than her female characters. In doing so Macdonald follows the pattern of the other four women playwrights who have been discussed in this study. In these three plays all of the men are shown from distinctively female perspective, regardless of whether they are present on the stage or only talked about. Macdonald writes about two kinds of male love - a father's love and a lover's love. Fiona has been depicted by her mother as having eyes only for her father, and when faced with the prospect that her growing up will deprive her of the father-

daughter intimacy that they shared when she was a child, she attempts to renounce her budding body.

MORAG. You'll have your doings soon. You'll be a young lady. That'll make Gran proud. Daddies don't tickle the tummies of young ladies.

FIONA. (...) Who'll tickle my tummy? I need my tummy tickled. Don't tell Gran. Promise. I don't want to be a young lady.

(...) I've just got hairs. Don't tell. Don't tell anyone. No one's to know. It'll be a secret, you and me. If I get breasts I'll cross my arms and no one'll know. (act I, scene i, pp. 16-7)

Flirting with androgyny may be taken as an allusion to the protagonist's latent homosexuality. Macdonald hints that this might be the case on several occasions in the play. For example, as children Fiona and Vari spend hours in Fiona's bedroom playing willie games, Fiona is afraid of snakes (another metaphor for the male genitals), Morag recounts a story about her sister Jane and her relationship with a female ATS sergeant during the Second World War. However, as with the abortion issue, Macdonald does not pursue this direction in the later course of the play and the sexual ambiguity which ensues from this leaves space for an open interpretation. This allusiveness is characteristic of all Macdonald's writing.

Alongside allusiveness, another characteristic of Macdonald's playwriting is its open-endedness. There is no resolution because a conflict has not been centralised in them. It seems as if, instead of dealing with a slice of life, Macdonald has chosen to portray life as a whole in a detached, docu-drama, black-and-white photographic style,²⁵ which is removed from naturalism by breaking down the time continuum into the synchronous present and past. She carefully avoids passing judgments, her chief aim

being documenting the lives of her characters without unnecessary didacticism. Any moralising that may be detected in her plays is overlaid with pert humour and quick sparky dialogue.

5.4. *When We Were Women (1988)*

The play follows the lives of a Scottish working class family during the two war years, 1943 and 1944. Alec is without work, his wife Maggie supports the family by cleaning people's houses, and their daughter Isla works in a canteen. One evening, during a blackout, Isla meets Mackenzie, a chief petty officer in the Royal Navy, and as their relationship develops, the cracks show in Alec and Maggie's marriage. The future looks bright for Isla, with a good man on her arm, but things deteriorate fast when, after their marriage, she finds out that Mackenzie is already married. After Mackenzie has been imprisoned for bigamy, Isla's parents make her give up her son for adoption. She finds it increasingly difficult to live with them, due to her mother's constant pressurising to find herself a new man. When she catches her mother in the act of burning the letters that Mackenzie has been writing to her, she walks out of the household and leaves her past life behind.

After the success of *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* in the West End, Ian Charleson asked Macdonald to write a part for him. This gave her the idea to write a prequel to *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* which would 'knit into the youth of Fiona's mother's generation'.²⁶ She entitled the play *When We Were Women* (1988).²⁷

While *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* dealt with the budding sexual awareness of a teenager in modern society, *When We Were Women* goes back in time to describe the predicament of an adolescent working-class woman during the Second World War. In terms of structure, Macdonald further develops the intricate web of

flashbacks, short scenes and explosive one-liners which had formed the basis of her previous play. The play's time span is not as extensive, the storyline fluctuates between the two war years, 1943 and 1944, and the play's plot focuses on the relationships between two generations of married couples. Macdonald's simple, rhythmic dialogue has become even more operatic, balancing between the nitty-gritty reality of kitchen sink drama and dreamlike war sequences. Macdonald distorts the pattern of kitchen sink drama in order to minimise the melodramatic elements of the plot. The constant shifts in time and location and the minimal set can be seen as distancing effects, and although we are not altogether in the realm of the absurdist theatre, it soon becomes clear that Macdonald's writing is non-naturalistic, and that the distancing effect which she uses bears certain Brechtian characteristics. Although a majority of the productions of *When We Were Women* has been naturalistic so far, expressionistic staging, acting and a minimal set have been recognised in Macdonald's writing as potentially challenging options. Armed with witty one-liners, and a stream-of-consciousness-structure, her plays have a definite cinematographic flair and the visual quality of post-impressionist paintings. This rich but elusive visuality may not always be theatrical in its nature: sometimes it represents a difficult task for directors to stage, and might furthermore be turned into didacticism or bitter-sweet melodrama, or completely lost if a director opted for naturalistic staging. In terms of themes, Macdonald develops the issues from the previous play while stepping back in time to show that the socially constructed gender roles have not changed significantly since the 1940's. In *When We Were Women* she further explores the issues of the position of a woman in the society of the 1940's, women's sexuality in relation to the working class

morality, illegitimate pregnancy, parent-child relationships, and the characters' preoccupation with death.

The reason why *When We Were Women* could be taken as a prequel to *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* is that it goes back one generation in order to deal with almost identical themes from the perspective of a young woman in the 1940's. The characters of a mother and a daughter bear heavy resemblances to those from the previous play. Maggie shares many characteristics with Morag in the sense that the both women have used pregnancy to coerce men into marrying them. Both of them have found their domain within the domestic sphere, they believe that a woman's duty is to be a wife and a mother. Morag constantly reminds Fiona that 'every woman needs to have a child,'²⁸ and Maggie tells Isla that 'a woman has to cleave to a man (...) a woman needs her man'.²⁹ Furthermore, the language of both women is characterised by constant references to housework and cooking, and in this way they epitomise the traditional image of the feminine. In the daughters' case, Macdonald compares Fiona's independence and strongmindedness with Isla's. They both scorn the traditional image of the feminine which has been created and perpetuated by patriarchal society, and they establish themselves as men's equals. For example, in the beginning of *When We Were Women*, Isla teases her mother about the hat which becomes a metaphor for female propriety. Similarly in *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, Morag and Fiona clash over Morag's summer Marks & Spencer's dress. Isla goes against the dress code when she goes out without a hat, and when Mackenzie first meets her, he comments that she cannot be a lady because '[she] havenie got a hat'.³⁰ Along with breaking the dress code, Isla also breaks the code of

manners. Ladies do not drink. Isla gulps down half a pint of gin for a bet. Ladies let gentlemen settle their bills. Isla offers to pay for Mackenzie's cinema ticket and is refused because '[he's] not that sort of man'³¹ and '[he'll] have no woman pay for [him]'.³² Ladies are sweet and submissive. Isla is a hard-hitting, loud-talking young woman who stands up against male domination in the relationship.

MACKENZIE. I don't like to see a woman smoke in the street.

ISLA. 'From Cath.' (*On the lighter.*)

MACKENZIE. Not my woman.

ISLA. I'm not yours. I belong to my own self. Don't you forget it. (act I, scene i, p. 105)

However, unlike Fiona who is the product of a different generation and who sees marriage and motherhood as an obstruction rather than fulfillment, Isla's rebellion against the gender code is external. She rejects the dress code and the code of manners, but she is still confined by the traditional ethical code. While Fiona uses her sexuality to manipulate her mother, turning Ewan, at the same time, into a tool of manipulation, Isla refuses to have premarital sex with Mackenzie in order to lure him into marrying her.

ISLA. (...) I'm not the first woman in your life. Not by a long chalk. I know. But I'm telling you this. I'll make damn sure I'm the last. See that raincoat. You can stop carrying that raincoat. You'll not get me on that raincoat. (act I, scene i, p. 105)

On the one hand, it is possible to interpret Isla's speech as her taking over the dominant role in her interaction with Mackenzie, as well as her rejection of the social acceptability of male sexual prowess, symbolised by the raincoat. On the other hand, in further events Macdonald shows us that this dominance is illusory. Isla's actions

prior to her marriage to Mackenzie reveal a deeply conventional young woman. When Mackenzie offers her a common law union, a union of hearts, she refuses it in favour of a formal marriage.

MACKENZIE. I vow to honour you. I vow to cleave to you.
By my word. By my honour. By my truth. As a plain sinner and a
man.

ISLA. Are you asking me to marry you?

MACKENZIE. Do you need more than that?

ISLA. What do you mean?

MACKENZIE. We're man and wife.

ISLA. No.

MACKENZIE. In God's eyes. In my eyes. In your eyes. This
is our moment.

ISLA. I still feel sick.

MACKENZIE. Isla.

A Woman stands at an open window.

ISLA. I need more than this.

MACKENZIE. Nemesis.

ISLA. In the eyes of the law. In the eyes of the world.

MACKENZIE. Catching up on me.

ISLA. God's in a church.

MACKENZIE. He's up there, just beyond the blackout Isla. I
know. He's watching me.

ISLA. Mrs Paterson down our road.

MACKENZIE. Will you marry me?

ISLA. Aye I will. I will so.

MACKENZIE. Oh God. (act I, scene iii, pp. 116-7)

Man's word and truth are alien to Isla, she does not recognise a man's honour. The only kind of honour that matters to her is woman's honour. Woman is supposed to be respectable, and this respectability can only be achieved in marriage. There are rules to be observed, the opinions of the others and the woman's accomplishment in domestic affairs, among others. With regard to the latter, in act I, scene ii, Maggie shows her frustration when Isla burns the potatoes.

MAGGIE: I feel the smell of that. All the way down the lane that's coming. Mrs Paterson'll smell that. Down at number four she'll smell that. The old ladies'll smell that. That's potatoes burning. That's onions burning. That's my good pot. My big pot. (...) What is it that we're having to wur tea tonight. Is it bread we're having. If that's what we're having, that's all we're having. Right down the road I smelt that. What is it? What is it? Is it no enough... Do you want them all to know? Showing off your troubles. The waste. We're no so well off that we can afford to ruin good food. Sending your troubles to waft off down the street. Letting them all know. The stink of your troubles. (act I, scene ii, pp. 105-6)

It is not the wasted food that Maggie is complaining about here. She uses food imagery such as 'potatoes', 'onions', etc., and imagery linked with food such as 'a good pot', 'smell', 'the waste', 'waft off', etc., to express her inner concern about the family's future in view of Isla's illegitimate pregnancy. Woman's language is used to express man's ideology which implies that woman's honour is conditioned by the man's word, truth and religion. In her attempt to assume a dominant position in the relationship and her rejection of a premarital affair, Isla unconsciously follows men's rules about what a woman is supposed to represent. This is further shown in Isla's father's wedding speech in which he instructs his daughter about a woman's position in the family microstructure and her duty to her man:

ALEC. (...) It's a wise woman that knows when to keep her mouth shut. For a man to marry is a great thing. He's giving up everything. A woman now that's a fair different story. A woman, she gains everything. Position. A place in the eyes of the world. On her finger for all to see she bears the mark of being wanted, the mark of her belonging. A ring. It's what she's been brought up for. The summit of her ambition. The goal of all her training. (...) Now you break him in gently. Be canny. Never nag. Give him that much freedom he never knows he's been caught. Keep his meals hot an' his bed well aired. Keep yersel' pure for him. An' mind you wear some perfume of an evening. (act I, scene v, pp. 136-7)

Alec refers to the virgin/strumpet dichotomy which is the foundation of traditional representation of the feminine. On another occasion, Mackenzie similarly compares women to angels. Both attitudes imply that in a man's eyes a woman represents a duality of purity and corruption. She is a virgin, a hunter and a seducer at the same time. She is also a gaoler who holds the power to emasculate. It is Isla's strength, along with her purity, that attracts Mackenzie to her, in a similar way that Alec is mesmerised by Maggie's passion and obstinacy. Similar to the protagonists in Rona Munro's *Bold Girls* and *The Maiden Stone* (either presented on the stage or absent) Macdonald's male characters depend on their female counterparts for gratification and reassurance about their dominant place in the communicational hierarchy. However, while weaker than the female characters, the male characters still have a potential to intrude into the woman's space and endanger her position within it. In *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, after conceiving, Fiona decides against blackmailing her mother into staying and for an abortion and informs Ewan of her decision. It is Ewan who reveals Fiona's pregnancy to Morag and sets the ball of subsequent events rolling. Similarly, a figure of an absent husband, Archie, is described by Vari as an intrusion in her domestic routine. When he is around she has to prepare special meals for him, he makes demands and questions her domestic expertise. In *When We Were Women*, Maggie loses her dominant position in the household when Alec finds out about unpaid bills and resorts to violence.

Alec bangs the table with the flat of his hand. Maggie digs her hand into her apron pocket. She brings out the bills. She hands them to Alec. He looks at them. He hits her. About the shoulders. She takes it.

ALEC. You've shamed me.
He leaves the room. Maggie leans on the table with her head on her arms. (act II, scene i, p. 143)

In simple, economical language Macdonald creates a powerful image of domestic violence as a means by which Alec chooses to regain the top position in the family hierarchy. It also shows that any independence which a woman might regain in man's world is relative, as much as any comparative security gained by marriage is elusive. In both plays women who have chosen to seek security in marriage are in precarious positions. Morag has been abandoned by her husband. Vari's and Maggie's position is based on duty and self-denial and they are dissatisfied with it. Mackenzie's wife Cath who is shown as an elusive mysterious figure of the Woman throughout the play, has been abandoned by Mackenzie, along with her two children. Isla finds out that her marriage is a sham because Mackenzie is already married to Cath who, as a Catholic, has refused to grant him a divorce. Similarly, Fiona's choice to remain single is seen as the other side of the coin, equally precarious. Macdonald does not make us decide upon the rightness or wrongness of one or the other, it is clear that any choice her characters make will bring about their respective consequences.

As has been mentioned earlier in the study, in Macdonald's plays, the male characters are dependent on the female characters. They reflect themselves against their female counterparts and feed their egos on them. For example, in a flashback beach scene in *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, Fiona pours water on Ewan while he is sunbathing. Ewan reacts in the fashion of a James Dean-like tough rebel from neighbourhood, in accordance to the 1960's image of assertive masculinity:

EWAN. (Screams) Fucking cunt.
Fiona moves away from him and sits staring out to sea. Ewan dries himself meticulously.

Jesus Christ, woman. What do you expect, creeping up on a man like that? Took my breath away. I mean, Jesus, Fiona. That water's freezing. It's not the bloody Mediterranean. What the hell do you have to play bloody stupid games for? I mean, shit, Fiona. Come on. What's a man supposed to do? I mean, shit, Fiona. Shit.

Pause.

Come here. Look at the bloody face on it. Come here. I forgive you. Come on, I'll give you a cuddle. Bloody hell, woman. Bloody listen, will you. Move your backside over here. I've said I forgive you. Jesus Christ, what do you fucking well want? Dear God, woman, it's not as if I sodding well hit you. I mean, if I'd hit you you'd have something to bloody gurn about. Don't be bloody ridiculous.

Pause.

You want me to say sorry to you. You sodding well do. You do. I sodding well won't. You're not a pissing hope. Shit.

Pause.

I'm fucking sorry. There. Is that bloody better?

Fiona moves over to him.

Bloody smile then. (act II, scene i, pp. 46-7)

This scene can be divided into several stages. In the first stage Fiona's action provokes Ewan's explosive reaction. By the use of violent language, Ewan establishes his dominance in the interaction. Fiona's silence expresses her surprise at his sudden change of mood, and her hurt. In the second stage, Ewan recognises that he has reacted too violently to a completely innocent joke and tries to defend his attitude. At this moment, his dominance begins to crumble, his words sound less self-assured and convincing, and Fiona's silence becomes empowered in the sense that it slides up the ladder of the communicational hierarchy. In the third stage, he is still unwilling to confess that he is in the wrong, but the surface of his offensive attitude continues to crack. At this point he uses curses again, this time in an attempt to regain his dominant position in the communicational hierarchy. Failing that, he reluctantly apologises in the fourth stage. Fiona still does not speak, but the physical act of her moving towards him signifies that the equilibrium has been reestablished.

Throughout Ewan's monologue his language remains violent both in tone and in phraseology, as he tries to uphold the assertive mode and retain his dominant position in the interaction. His dominance is further emphasised by Fiona's silence. Her defensive attitude is described in the stage directions, i. e. '*Fiona moves away*', '*[she] sits staring out to sea*', '*pause*', and '*Fiona moves over to him*'. This is in accordance with the hypothesis that men are more likely to curse and interrupt other parties to assert their central position in conversation, while women, being by their nature more polite and submissive, are more likely to be interrupted and remain silent. In *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, this hypothesis is turned on its head in view of Fiona's sexual and intellectual development. At the end of the play, in another flashback beach scene following Ewan's confession to Morag, the gender roles are reversed, with Fiona taking over a dominant position and establishing an assertive mode in her interaction. For the purpose of analysis this scene will be given in its entirety

1966

The beach.

Ewan is at the tunnel entrance. Fiona walks over to him.

FIONA. You're a wee shit, aren't you?

EWAN. I did it for the best.

FIONA. What best? Who's best? What were you? Playing the fucking hero. Is that it?

EWAN. I hardly think...

FIONA. No, you don't, do you? You don't think. What did you think was gonnie happen? Come on. I'm interested. What did you think you'd accomplish with your blabbing mouth? What did you think? What did you think? I'm fucking fascinated to know.

EWAN. I thought...

FIONA. I can see you, standing there with your head bowed. Did you bow your wee head, Ewan, in all humility: Did you duck your wee fat bonce? Were your big bony knees shaking? Were you humble? 'I'm awfully sorry, Mrs McBridie, but our dear sweet

daughter Fiona, of whom I'm awfully fond, I hope you'll forgive me but I stuck one up her and now she's in the family way.' Is that your style, Ewan? Is it? Did it go like that? Did I get it right? Answer me.

EWAN. I think...

FIONA. No, not you. Did you come the big man? Did you stand there tall, your proud head held high? Up on your high arse. 'I've done wrong, Mrs McBridie. Fiona's pregnant. I have no apologies to make. I'm prepared to marry her.' Was that it, Ewan? Or did you tell her daughter's a whore? Did you sit her down with a nice wee drink? Did you bring her a bunch of flowers? Did you walk her round the garden? How did you tell her? Come on. Come on. Answer me. Cunt.

Ewan hits Fiona. Silence.

That's a mighty answer. There's a big man. Potent and virile. He can fuck a bint and he can swing his fists too.

EWAN. It wasn't easy.

FIONA. No.

EWAN. I felt I had to.

FIONA. Yes.

EWAN. You couldn't go on alone.

FIONA. What do you think I'm going to be now? I was getting on fine with my mother and she liked me. We were turning into good companions. What do you think you've done to that.

EWAN. You're pregnant.

FIONA. Congratulations.

EWAN. Fiona.

FIONA. Och, well.

EWAN. I felt I had to.

FIONA. Go away.

EWAN. I...

FIONA. Go away.

Ewan goes out. Fiona sits on the towel. (act II, scene iii, pp. 77-8)

In this scene, Fiona is the one who uses the language which is violent both in tone and in phrase, in the manner which is usually ascribed to men. For example, she calls Ewan 'a wee shit' and 'the fucking hero'. In this way she undermines his image of himself as a righteous man who acts in accordance to male honour, and shows that his act of confession to her mother is driven not by honour, but by fear. Ewan, on the contrary, makes excuses ('I did it for the best', 'I felt I had to') and is repeatedly interrupted by Fiona ('I hardly think...', 'I thought...', 'I think...'), in the defensive mode which is

usually associated with women. Macdonald shows how Ewan's frustration with his loss of dominance through language turns into an attempt to regain this dominance through violence. Being unable to face a cascade of verbal abuse from Fiona, he stops it by hitting her. Interestingly, he hits her after she has called him a 'cunt'. Besides carrying obvious sexual connotations, the word has been given a female (negative) attributes, and for this reason it provokes violent reaction from Ewan. This time, however, Fiona has taken the control of the language and what follows can be referred to as a linguistic emasculation of Ewan's character.

Similarly, in *When We Were Women*, Alec refers to himself as being called 'a cock of the walk' and 'the Duke'³³ in his premarital days, but in reality he is an alcoholic and insecure about his wife's faithfulness and his own masculinity. Mackenzie is far from being a war hero. The first time he appears on the stage he is crawling in fear before the bombs. Throughout the play he puts on the mask of a bold sailor, a hard-boiled man of the world, but by the end he will let the mask fall and confess to his cowardice:

MACKENZIE. Terrible kind of self-pity about me now. Always was. Touch of the maudlin about me. That hacked body lyin' there. Men go from this man's navy. Men walk. Disappear. Not me. I havenie got the guts. God. You missed something out when you made me. (act II, scene iv, p. 160)

Mackenzie is a womaniser and a bigamist who is driven into the marriage with Isla not just by love for her but also by fear - fear of the war and the death which surrounds him and which has taken away his younger brother, fear that he will miss out on life, fear of responsibility towards Cath and her children.

The male characters are weakened even more by the refusal of the female characters to accept their authority. The women are obviously the ones who call the shots in their respective relationships. Alec is afraid of Maggie to such an extent that he silently allows her to water down his booze, and when an accidental spark from the fireplace smudges a carpet he is beyond himself with fear. Maggie's dominance over him is expressed among other instances in his and Isla's conversation about the rug.

ALEC. She'll smell it. That's what she'll do. Smell of burning wool. Hangs about. Open up the windaes will you. Wee pit holes in the rug. 'You should have had the fire-guard on' I'm for it Isla. 'What did you not have the fire-guard on for?' She'll do me. 'You wi' your great feet. That's my good rug.' Pungent. That's what it is, burning wool. There's no getting away from it. Pungent smell that is.

ISLA. It's your rug too.

ALEC. I'll go into the works.

Isla comes in with a bowl of water, a bar of soap and a cloth.

She'll know. She'll know if it's wet.

ISLA. You can't help a coal fire sparking.

ALEC. That's what it's there for. The guard.

ISLA. You're scared of her.

ALEC. I've lived with your Mother for thirty years.

ISLA. Well then.

ALEC. I've learnt respect.

ISLA. For goodness sake.

ALEC. Your Mother's got a tongue on her. (act I, scene i, pp. 99-100)

The dominant participant in communication (Maggie) is absent from the scene and her central position is shown through the interaction between the dominated participant in communication (Alec) and the mediating participant in communication (Isla). Isla, in the role of the mediating party, pursues arguments in Alec's favour, and Alec, who acts as a dominated participant in communication, recreates Maggie's language pattern

in order to draw attention to the absent dominant participant in communication and his own submissive position.

Mackenzie and Isla's relationship echoes that of Alec and Maggie in the sense that Mackenzie also complies to Isla's rules although he is aware that by yielding to her wish to marry he is committing a criminal offence. It is as if Macdonald has turned the definitions of gender roles upside-down to show that the limitations placed on the women's choices are *passé*, their identities cannot be reflected through their fathers and husbands any longer, they have guts in this world and they *also* should be given the right to govern their own lives as they see fit. Isla repudiates her parents' morality and the traditional image of a respectable woman who 'cleaves to her man' ³⁴ and walks out of the household thereby completing her rebellion against codes of behaviour imposed by patriarchal ideology. Her choice of independence bears no victory, it brings her nothing but an uncertain future.

When Isla realises that by marrying her Mackenzie has committed bigamy, and that indeed she has been fooled into a relationship that is illicit in nature, she is horrified and leaves him. At this point she still complies to the traditional values of a patriarchal society, as implied in Alec's wedding speech. The hypocrisy of the social codes which she has been following will fully dawn on her only after she has been faced with her parents' request to get rid of her son, and the revelation that they have been burning Mackenzie's letters to her. In both plays, Macdonald touches upon the topic of abortion and adoption as possible solutions to an unwanted or teenage pregnancy. Both Fiona and Isla give their sons up for adoption on the insistence of their parents.

In neither case is the issue of adoption explored in detail, indicating that this is a shameful reality of women's lives, something to be brushed under the carpet. Paradoxically, in both plays, it also enables these two protagonists to get on with their lives without restrictions that any familial unit forces upon women..

Another issue which continuously recurs in Macdonald's plays is the characters' preoccupation with death. In her debut play, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, this issue is implied in Morag's recurring speeches about the passing of time. Morag is afraid that Fiona will never have a child, as this would mean the spiritual and physical death of their family. In both plays that have been analysed so far the issue has been used further by Macdonald to examine her characters' and her own attitudes towards religion. Religion is seen as a constraint and it is given male properties, e. g. Mackenzie's prayer in *When We Were Women* is an accolade to masculinity:

MACKENZIE. (...) Do not snuff me out. Me. God. Not me. I mean God. You're a man. God. We're men together God. You and me. The pleasures of the flesh eh. Soft flesh. Wrap you round. I bet you've had your fling God. In your time. You've got to admit it. You were a one. Eh? Eh? And now, eh? Stuck up there in your nice heaven what have you got left. A pile of angels. There's no a lot you can do wi' an angel. I mean when it comes right down to it. God. Looking that's all you've got left. You're a bit of a voyeur. (act I, scene i, p. 93)

God being equalled to a man automatically excludes a woman from religion as an insignificant other. She is subservient to both God who is Man and the Man himself who is the patriarch and breadwinner of the family. Macdonald reverses this image in both plays in order to dethrone God-Man.

The whole issue of preoccupation with death is given more focus in *When We Were Women* by Macdonald's setting of the play's action in the midst of German air-raids during the Second World War. Under the constant threat of death the characters are driven to live their lives to the full and make choices which may not have been considered in other circumstances, such as bigamy. There is also a sense of loss which ensues from the focus of Macdonald's writing on the past rather than the future. One may argue that in *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* and *When We Were Women* this sense of loss derives from the main protagonists' reflection of their past in what resembles a stream-of-consciousness structure.

5.5. *The Winter Guest* (1995)

The play follows one day in the life of the eight characters: Elspeth and her daughter Frances, a photographer whose mourning after her husband's death might make her decide to move to Australia; Frances' son Alex and Nita, a young girl he meets at the beach; Chloe and Lily, the two elderly women who spend their days attending the funerals of people whom they have never met before; and Tom and Sam, two schoolboys who bunk off their classes to spend a day at the beach. There is no chronological plotline, the characters' life stories intermingle, and the feeling of loss is intensified by the fact that all of them have been touched by death in one way or another: Frances by the loss of her husband, Elspeth and Alex by the ways in which her grief has affected them, Chloe and Lily by the awareness of the approaching end of their lives, and Sam by Tom's actual death in the sea.

The theme of death and loss is given the central position in the third of Macdonald's plays under consideration, *The Winter Guest*. The play was written in 1994, and first

performed at the West Yorkshire Playhouse Courtyard Theatre on 23 January 1995, directed by Alan Rickman.

In his article 'Paired off for a night of big chills' ³⁵ Benedict Nightingale has compared *The Winter Guest* with a Turner painting. The fact that a number of critics have dwelt on the similarity of Macdonald's plays with other visual arts becomes even more intriguing when one considers her admission that visual art is an inseparable part of her writing:

I used to write in compounds. (...) I would write the entire speeches and then put them together. Then I started drawing, writing and drawing, I mean, like a microplan. What that's come down to is drawing on pieces of paper. I joined the drawing and writing and started to make pictures. I left those drawings lying on my desk and it simply started to happen that way. (...) Actually when you look at the time that it takes to write the whole page you can see mistakes and how the clarity of the painting corresponds with the clarity of the writing. ³⁶

While the visual element figures strongly in all Macdonald's plays, in terms of structure *The Winter Guest* represents a departure from the two plays previously discussed. In *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* and in *When We Were Women*, the stories are narrated in flashbacks, and time and location shift constantly from one scene to another in order to highlight the crucial moments in the protagonists' lives. In *The Winter Guest*, however, Macdonald has done away with the flashbacks and the entire play is set at one time, a winter day some time in the present, and at a single location, a deserted beach on the east coast of Scotland, somewhere in the vicinity of Edinburgh. Macdonald divides the play into four storylines which are linked into a carefully assembled patchwork of individual human destinies which, when viewed as a whole, blend into each other on a more universal level. In terms of themes, Zenzinger has

justly regarded *The Winter Guest* as a summing-up of the four major themes that permeate Macdonald's entire opus, namely the themes of 'loneliness, past happiness, present possibilities and the dread of an unknown future'.³⁷ In this play, Macdonald follows one day in the lives of eight very different characters. She pairs up the characters into four couples in order to single out and focus on one theme at time, as well as to draw one's attention to the four different relationships. Each pair of characters represents a stage in the natural cycle of spring, summer autumn and winter, the temporal cycle of the past, present and future, which is also the cycle of human life. In the cases of three of the couples the characters are peers with similar interests and preoccupations, while in the fourth case we follow the relationship between two women who belong to different generations and whose interaction is based on a reversed mother-daughter role. All of the couples are interlinked in one way or another, either through familial links or through chance encounters. Their respective interactions at the same time interrupt and add to each other. In this way, after having divided the storyline into four different strands in order to explore the ensuing issues separately, Macdonald ties together different cycles to show that life as a whole consists of the myriad pieces of a mosaic which invite constant reinterpretation. *The Winter Guest*, more than any other play that Macdonald has written so far, shows how she deals with the four themes which are under scrutiny in this study, in a completely different way from the other four authors. Macdonald's characters have reached the end of their search, and are observing from the present perspective both the present and the past in an attempt to find a way to accept their situation. This is reflected in the images of photographs, telescopes and photography which are present throughout the play. At the beginning of the play we see one of the characters, Elspeth, standing

on the landing and looking through a telescope. Elspeth's daughter, Frances, is a professional photographer who takes pictures of buildings and still life. The telescope and photography symbolise the characters' voyeuristic interest in the world around them, as well as their personal introspection into their own emotional lives. It also represents an attempt to freeze time, in a manner of speaking, to stop nature's cycle. In the analysis which follows, each storyline will be dealt with separately, and subsequently brought together in the conclusion.

The first storyline deals with one day in the lives of two elderly women, Chloe and Lily. Most of their time is divided between reliving past memories of their youth, when everybody was dancing and when there were no funerals, because 'no one died then', ³⁸ and attending funerals of people they have never met and whose obituaries they find in the daily press.

CHLOE.(...) (*She nods at the paper.*) Anyone we know?

LILY. No. No I don't think so. Not yet. (act I, p. 177)

Chloe and Lily represent the winter of human life, the time when little things, such as squabbles about whether there was cream after the war and indulging in an occasional French cake after a funeral, become a way of coming to terms with one's fragility and with the 'winter guest', death, which lurks around the corner. Macdonald presents the characters of Chloe and Lily as a tragicomic couple, a sort of a female Didi and Gogo, whose interaction has a distinct absurdist element. For example, there are similarities between the following scene from the play and the comic discourse of Beckett's characters.

LILY. Suck on a peppermint.
 CHLOE. Eh?
 LILY. An extra strong mint. Keep you warm.
 CHLOE. Have you got one?
Lily searches in her bag.
 LILY. I haven't.
 CHLOE. You haven't.
 LILY. I haven't.
 CHLOE. You haven't got a peppermint?
 LILY. I'm sorry.
 CHLOE. Getting my hopes up. Think before you speak, Lily.
 I'll thank you to do that.
 LILY. I'm sorry.
 CHLOE. Easy enough said. Sorry. Doesn't make it better. It's
 the expectation. An extra strong mint. I'm salivating. Look at
 those clouds. I hate to be late. Bad manners to be late. We'll miss
 going past the flower man. We'll miss the flower man when he doffs
 his hat.
 LILY. He won't be there.
 CHLOE. He's always there.
 LILY. In this weather?
 CHLOE. Will we walk?
 LILY. The old days with them walking in front. That's what I
 liked.
 CHLOE. The dancing days.
 LILY. Hardly dancing. Hardly at funerals.
 CHLOE. No such thing as funerals then. No one died then. (act
 I, pp. 183-4)

It is evident that there is a certain hierarchy involved in their interaction, with Chloe playing a dominant role, as opposed to Lily whose language mode is more submissive and defensive. However, there is a difference between this pattern and the conversation pattern between for example Ewan and Fiona from *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*. The purpose of the offense-defense strategy used by Ewan and Fiona is to show the power-struggle between the two characters. Here, in Chloe and Lily's interaction, there are no interruptions and no real conflict on either side. Certain things may remain unsaid and certain lines might seem warped and

disconnected from the rest of the conversation, showing that the characters are enclosed in their respective thoughts. Their interaction is given a placid, even comic resonance, because the power-struggle for the upper hand in the communicational hierarchy has been removed from their role-playing. All this shows that the relationship between the two women is based on a deeper kind of mutual understanding. They are dependent on each other for emotional and physical support and comfort. For one moment, it seems that their waiting is over when 'Godot' finally appears in the form of a number 26 bus, to take them to yet another funeral. However, the second act finds them back on the promenade, and this time their roles are reversed. The strong and willful Chloe from the first act is gone, and the silly, impressionable Lily has taken over the dominant role:

LILY. You'll freeze to that rail.
 CHLOE. What harm is there?
 LILY. I don't know what's wrong with you.
 CHLOE. I fell.
 LILY. It's treacherous. You slipped, that's all.
 CHLOE. I let go of this. Take a finger off this. I let go. I'll fall
 again.
 LILY. Don't be...
 CHLOE. I'll fall.
 LILY. You will not.
 CHLOE. I'm telling you.
 LILY. Oh for God's sake.
 CHLOE. That ground's waiting for me.
Pause.
 LILY. Take my arm.
 CHLOE. Bring us both down.
 LILY. I'm strong. Take my arm.
Pause.
 Do you think I can't hold you? Eh? Do you? I can hold you.
 CHLOE. I never slipped.
 LILY. We've a funeral to go to on Thursday.
 CHLOE. I lost the world. As God's my witness. The world went
 away from me. I didn't slip. The world fell away.
 LILY. It's been a long day.

CHLOE. You took your time getting to me, Lily. It was all black. Thick black. Didn't know where I was. Don't know where I am yet. (act II, pp. 250-1)

This example is a good example of a 'rapport talk' which has been mentioned by a number of theorists such as Deborah Cameron (*Verbal Hygiene*, 1995) and Deborah Tannen (*You Just Don't Understand*, 1992)). Even when they are in disagreement, the disagreement serves to emphasise their solidarity, rather than competition for the upper place in the communicational hierarchy. The sentences are short, often subjectless, and although they do not necessarily answer to the statements which precede them, there is a sense of inner accord and deep understanding, a kind of sisterhood. With regard to their mood, there is an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and resignation on the part of Chloe, which is emphasised by her constantly using terms such as 'fell', 'slipped', 'bring [...] down', 'lost the world', 'went away', and 'fell away', all signifying her weakness and wish to give in. These terms are counterpointed by Lily's quiet support, emphasised in her usage of terms such as 'hold', 'strong'. She subverts the meaning of the image of a funeral, the metaphor of death, into a metaphor of hope, giving it positive connotations of a purpose, an aim, so as to prevent Chloe from falling in both a literal and a metaphoric sense.

It is evident from their conversation that the women have become willing prisoners of their memories in an attempt to cling to time and stop it from passing. Macdonald emphasises human frailty and fear of the unknown through an intricately woven relationship between two forgotten souls. When discussing a priest's speech at a

graveside, Chloe and Lily reminisce on his use of the word 'dragonfly', ³⁹ as a metaphor of this frailty and insignificance in the framework of a larger world picture:

CHLOE. He said we were all dragonflies. That man.
When we were alive we were larva in the mud.
LILY. Larvae.
CHLOE. When we died we spread our iridescent wings
in the sunshine of God's love and frolicked. That minister. With the
drip at his nose. That's what he said. That minister.
LILY. You take my arm.
CHLOE. What the hell did he mean?
LILY. It was a metaphor.
CHLOE. A metaphor?
LILY. Nothing wrong with a dragonfly.
CHLOE. Are we maggots in the slime, Lily? Is that all
we are? (act II, pp. 251-2)

Another two metaphors which Chloe uses to express human frailty are 'larvae in the mud' ⁴⁰ and 'maggots in the slime'. ⁴¹ Life is always portrayed as decaying, passing, something that one cannot hold on to. Interestingly, although the concepts of a waste or a loss of time are constantly on their minds, their encounter with impending death in the first act, when Chloe accidentally collides with Tom whose death haunts the play, remains unnoticed.

The second storyline touches upon several issues such as the mother-daughter relationship, death, love, loneliness, and artistic creation. It also represents the meeting point of two stages in the natural cycle, summer (Frances) and autumn (Elspeth). Frances is a widow in her late thirties who has still not come to terms with the recent death of her husband, to the extent that she has completely distanced herself from her mother Elspeth and her teenage son Alex. She is on the point of making an important decision that may change both her and her son's lives, namely she has to

decide whether to stay at home or move to Australia. Her mother comes to visit her to try and convince her that going to Australia would be useless escapism. The story does not show them at a crucial moment - they must have been through the same argument many times - and there is no resolution. At the end of the day, we do not know any more about what Frances's decision will be than at its beginning. However, there is a change, no matter how slight, as every word, action and encounter are imprinted on a canvas of a larger scheme of things. The first issue that Macdonald explores in the course of this storyline is the relationship between a mother and a daughter. In the beginning, this relationship resembles the recurrent pattern in Scottish literature which involves a bickering mother, a rebel daughter, and an absent father. Elspeth is a motherly, caring figure who treats Frances like a child. For example, she constantly reminisces about Frances' winning of a beauty contest when she was a little girl, she talks about their walks, and she flies off the handle when Frances cuts her hair short. Frances is mostly placid, she does not engage in argument with her mother, although it is obvious that she is an equally strong and wilful character who will have her own way regardless of her mother's disapproval. The Freudian references to daughters' closeness to their fathers, and the issue of motherhood and nurture as being socially integrated in a woman's identity, rather than biologically encoded are all there. On the surface, this may easily be viewed as a classical example of the model of a mother-daughter conflict. Macdonald's characters never discuss their problems openly, instead they always engage in discussions about insignificant things. This impedes any potential solution to the conflict in Macdonald's plays, and invites their open-endedness. There are no radical solutions, only constantly recurring situations. Macdonald provides a detailed analysis of people as particles in eternity, and of the

ways in which they cope with their mortality. The interaction between Elspeth and Frances, which involves an ongoing nagging on the part of Elspeth and a seeming coldness on the part of Frances is less a competition for domination and more a cry of their respective loneliness and their need for reconciliation. This idea is represented in an image of Frances 'shrugging her mother into a fur coat and rubbing the collar up against her face to give her pleasure', ⁴² sympathy and warmth of a human touch against the ashen winter background of Elspeth's life.

An example of the characters' evasion of the burning issues in their lives, and engagement in discussions about insignificant things, is Elspeth's and Frances's argument about hair:

ELSPETH. What have you done? What have you done to your hair? Oh Frances. Your lovely hair. Cherub, what have you done?
 FRANCES. Cut it.
 ELSPETH. I can see that. That's plain to see.
 FRANCES. Needed a change.
 ELSPETH. Oh God.
 FRANCES. Don't you like it?
 ELSPETH. Your beautiful hair.
 FRANCES. A trim, that's all.
 ELSPETH. Is that how you call it?
 FRANCES. It'll grow.
 ELSPETH. Did you pay someone to do that to you?
 FRANCES. Boyish, don't you think?
 ELSPETH. Mannish.
 FRANCES. Gives me cheekbones.
 ELSPETH. Are you depressed?
 FRANCES. I like it.
 ELSPETH. Doesn't make you look any younger.
 FRANCES. The time has come for me to embrace my years, don't you think mother? Welcome them. Not fight them any more.
 ELSPETH. Don't talk nonsense. Why should you embrace your years, no one else does. Anything to be different, Frances. You were the same when you were a wee girl. It's the kingdom of youth that we're living in Frances. I never thought I'd see you let yourself

go. No matter what's happened to you. Never give in. Is it your work? (act I, p. 185)

The conversation begins at Elspeth's refusal of Frances' decision to cut her hair. In the beginning of the scene, Elspeth treats Frances like a child. She refers to her as a 'cherub'⁴³ and asks her questions which one would address to a naughty child, such as 'what have you done'.⁴⁴ Later in the scene Elspeth's tone changes, she begins an argument about Frances's age, and transfers their conversation on a different plane. It is obvious that Elspeth believes that Frances's act of cutting her hair to a boy's length is an act of self-defeminisation. What derives from this is the notion of androgyny with which Macdonald plays throughout the play, especially with regard to Frances' and Nita's appearances. Nita and Frances have placed their sexuality in secondary position and they try to define their identities outside of it. For Nita this has taken the form of a process of personal growth during which she focuses on her own needs rather than the needs of her partner. Frances has cut herself from her sexuality, which is an uncontrollable force, and redesigned her life in a controllable orderly manner so as to protect herself from the past, which has brought her pain, and from the unknown future, which scares her.

The above conversation also reflects Elspeth's own anxiety about the passing of time, ageing and the death. In act I, Elspeth discusses the discrepancy between physical time and one's notion of time with regard to ageing when she says that she is 'the same as [she] was at seventeen'⁴⁵ and that it would be fairer if people aged on the inside, and not on the outside. Another of Elspeth's references to passage of time is with regard to Frances's withdrawal from public life following her husband's death. Elspeth

accuses Frances of wasting her life, of an obsession with the past, and furthermore she refers to Frances and her husband's relationship as an obsessive love which left no room for caring for anybody else.

ELSPETH. Don't you play the innocent. You had room for no one else in your life, the two of you.

FRANCES. You're trespassing, Mother.

ELSPETH. I'm scared to death.

FRANCES. I'm warning you.

ELSPETH. No room for that boy in your lives. Don't you walk away from me. As well he's dead. There. I'll say what has to be said. You were obsessed the two of you. You're obsessed yet.
(*She takes a picture down.*)

FRANCES. Give it to me.

Pause.

Give it to me.

ELSPETH. Days passing in a dream. He lives in your dreams now. Don't you tell me. Days lost. Weeks. And then you'll look. Years'll be gone. Years will have passed from out of your grasp. And you'll wonder where they've gone to. One life, that's all. You'll not get the lost years back.

FRANCES. It was dark blue that raincoat. (act I, p. 198)

When she feels that her loss of control in the interaction with her mother might lead to an open verbal conflict, Frances undertakes certain steps in order to avoid it. Firstly, she warns her mother that she resents the direction in which the conversation is going. This having failed, she tries to walk away, but is promptly stopped by Elspeth who is determined to be heard. Finally, as her last resort she changes the subject. This is in accordance with the theories which advocate that women speakers are less likely to get involved in a verbal conflict than their male counterparts, as has been discussed earlier in this study.

As can be seen from the above passage, Macdonald plays with the notion that only in the death of love can Frances regain her freedom and wake up to reality. Another reference to this is Alex's telling Nita that his father's ghost will haunt the house until Frances joins him. Frances lives with the past and this past is symbolised by her husband's photographs scattered around the house. It reflects the powerful hold that an absent husband has over her even in the death.

Macdonald offers an escape into reality through artistic creation. In order to help her daughter overcome her husband's death, Elspeth buys her a camera. The presence of her husband's photographs in the house indicate that Frances is a keen photographer. However, her photographs have become the reflection of her present state of mind - callous, empty and lifeless. Elspeth complains about Frances taking photos of school buildings rather than people. She warns her that the death (inanimate objects) she photographs has dried her up, and that leaving will change the fact that her unhappiness has made her 'mutilate' herself physically (by cutting her hair), emotionally (by refusing to move on with her life) and artistically (by making lifeless photographs which do not involve any risk):

ELSPETH. I thought you'd take people. That's what I thought you wanted it for. People, that's why I bought it.

FRANCES. What's wrong with them?

ELSPETH. Have you nothing exciting to show me? (act I, p. 193)

Elspeth refers to the fact that Frances's photos depict dead, inanimate objects. There is no life in them, in the same way that Frances has given up on her own life. There is also an element of androgyny in them, they are cold and impersonal. Elspeth

complains that there is nothing of Frances's character in them, 'a man could have taken these (...) Your hair and your work. You're all of a piece now'.⁴⁶ Frances's decision to fend for herself baffles Elspeth:

FRANCES. I'm not looking for a husband.
 ELSPETH. You can't live alone.
 FRANCES. I've Alex.
 ELSPETH. You're still young... (act I, p. 195)

For Elspeth, a woman cannot stand on her own, she needs a man, and a family. Elspeth believes in romance, but she also sees woman's sexuality as predatory. After catching a voyeuristic glimpse of Alex and Nita's encounter through a telescope, she thrives on the possibility of their awakening romance, but she has mental reservations about Nita's sexuality and how it may affect Alex:

ELSPETH. It wants that face. (*She's at the telescope. She's watching Alex.*) Alex. Oh now. Now, now, now. You be careful. (*Watching them both.*) What does it want, eh? What will it get? Mind yourself cherub. Never be enough for that face, Alex. Nothing's enough for that face. It'll eat you up. Gobble you down. And when it's finished, it'll walk away. Leave you an empty shell. You mind. Want, want, want, a face like that. Ah we all want. I've always wanted. I'm wanting yet. (act I, p. 174)

The face that Elspeth refers to is the face of a woman's sexuality, it is the face which wants and which never ages. In the concluding segment of the monologue she further expresses the idea that human needs do not diminish with age, or indeed with the death of the loved one, as is shown from Frances's example. Elspeth advises her daughter that she should put some colour in her life, and invite chaos with outstretched arms. The chaos about which she is talking is the chaos of life, all aspects of life including

one's sexuality - the very thing from which Frances has been trying to escape. Paradoxically, the first photos of an animate subject that she takes, during their walk on the beach, are the photos of Tom. In view of the following events, one may argue that whilst it is his purity and innocence that attracts her attention in the first place, what she actually catches on the film is not an image of innocence, but a record of the impending death.

The third and fourth storylines represent the springtime of human life. The third storyline deals with the awakening love between Alex, Frances's son, and Nita, a young girl whom he meets on the beach. Alex is an insecure teenager who strives to come to terms with the effects of his father's death and his mother's estrangement, as well as the confusion that he feels when he meets Nita. In her portrayal of the young lovers, Macdonald presents a model of teenage love which is romanticised and frozen in time. The concept of eternity recurs throughout the play, from Elspeth's allusion to the discrepancy between her body growing old and the eternal youth of her spirit, to Nita's speech about a never-ending day 'left to [them] out of all [their] lives'⁴⁷ when she lures Alex to join her for a walk on the frozen sea, as does Tom who refers to the sea as the end of the old world:

TOM. No one's been here ever before. That's a fucking miracle. Eh? See the rock. We'll get past that. We will so. Then there'll be nothing. Just nothing. And all the time in the world for it. (act II, p. 241)

The whiteness of the frozen sea is seen here as metaphor for innocence and eternity, but it can also be interpreted as metaphor for death. It is not coincidence that Macdonald has set the play in winter-time; there is something infinite about that time in

nature's cycle, something that at the same time entails death and deathlessness. It signifies the last stage of the human life cycle, but it is also a prelude to spring, the time of nature's awakening. In this sense it relates to all the characters in the play who are at the end (or the beginning) of a certain cycle in their life. For Chloe and Lily it is the winter of their lives, for Elspeth and Frances it signifies the potential for a closer bond between them that would end their loneliness, and for Nita and Alex it is the awakening of their sexuality in the wake of the loss of their innocence.

The fourth storyline recounts an afternoon in the lives of the two schoolboys, Sam and Tom, who have decided to give school a bunk in favour of playing at the beach. Their games have proved a fertile field for Macdonald's comic interpretation of pre-teenage angst with regard to one's self-image, sexuality and relationships, and notions of masculinity which culminate in a hilarious scene in which Tom rubs Deap Heat cream on his penis to make it grow:

TOM.	Sam.
SAM.	What?
TOM.	It's burning.
SAM.	Bound to, a bit.
TOM.	Sam.
SAM.	What?
TOM.	Sam.
SAM.	For fuck sake.
TOM.	It's burning. It's burning. My penis is on fire.
SAM.	Jesus. Keep your keks up. (<i>Runs down to the edge of the sea. Grabs some ice.</i>)
TOM.	Help my Bob. Help my Bob.
SAM.	They'll can see.
TOM.	Help me. Help me. Help me.
SAM.	Gonnie get yourself arrested.
TOM.	My dong's falling off.
<i>Sam drops the ice in Tom's pants. Tom screams. Sam zips him into his trousers.</i>	
SAM.	Quiet.

Pause.

Better?

TOM. Oh fuck. Oh fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. Mammy, Daddy, Mammy, Daddy, fuck fuck fuck.

SAM. Is it better? Is it? Is it?

TOM. Mammy, Daddy, Mammy, Daddy.

SAM. Shut up for fuck's sake.

TOM. Oh shite, oh shite.

SAM. Want me to belt you?

TOM. Bugger, bugger, bugger, bugger.

SAM. I'll belt you if you don't shut up.

Pause.

It was only a wee bit of cream.

TOM. You try it. You try it. Just you bloody try it.

Pause.

SAM. You cryin'?

TOM. Bloody cry if I want to.

Sam passes him a handkerchief.

SAM. Has it grown.

TOM. Fucking dropped off that's what it's done.

SAM. Has it though?

TOM. No. (act I, pp. 215-6)

Here, like in her earlier play *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, Macdonald portrays the male characters as either absent or adolescent and weaker than the female characters. By doing this, she invites the need to redefine the traditional image of the masculine as being strong and potent. In the above example, the two boys address this image in their discussion about the size of a penis and its connotations for the concept of the male sexuality, on the one hand, and the popular notion that men do not cry, on the other. Both notions are undermined by Tom's reaction to the incident with the Deep Heat.

Although all of the four storylines seem to bear equal importance in the framework of the play, the fourth represents the seam that holds together all of the other play's elements. In one way or another the boys touch the lives of other characters for a brief

moment, either by words or by actions, before those characters forget about them in the sea of their own preoccupations. Here, Macdonald shows how life drifts away without one's registering it. Tom's death at the end of the play remains unnoticed by everybody except for his classmate, and it has done nothing to alter the state of Macdonald's melancholic universe.

Notes.

Chapter Five - Girls, Women and Mothers: Recognition and Acceptance in Three Plays by Sharman Macdonald

- ¹ Benedict Nightingale's review of the London production of *The Winter Guest* in *The Times*, 16 March, 1995, p. 30.
- ² Sharman Macdonald, 'Introduction' in *Sharman Macdonald: Plays One* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. ix.
- ³ Transcript of a phone interview with Sharman Macdonald, 12 April 1997, p. 2.
- ⁴ Ann Brooks, *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 30.
- ⁵ A. Yeatman, *Postmodern Revisionings of the Political* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 49.
- ⁶ Susan Faludi, *The Backlash* (London: Vintage, 1992), p. 15.
- ⁷ Sharman Macdonald, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* in *Sharman Macdonald: Plays One* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).
- ⁸ Peter Zenzinger, 'The New Wave' in *The Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (ed.) Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (Edinburgh: EUP, 1996), p. 29.
- ⁹ Idem.
- ¹⁰ Sharman Macdonald, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, p. 83.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 67.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 45.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 20.
- ¹⁴ Idem.
- ¹⁵ Sharman Macdonald, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, p. 15.
- ¹⁶ Peter Zenzinger, 'The New Wave', p. 135.
- ¹⁷ Sharman Macdonald, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, p. 26.
- ¹⁸ Idem.
- ¹⁹ Idem.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 61.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 29.
- ²² Ibid., p. 26.
- ²³ Idem.
- ²⁴ Peter Zenzinger, 'The New Wave', p. 135.
- ²⁵ as seen from Frances and Elspeth's conversation in Sharman Macdonald's *The Winter Guest* in *Sharman Macdonald: Plays One*, pp. 195-7)
- ²⁶ Sharman Macdonald, 'Introduction' in *Sharman Macdonald: Plays One*, p. vii.
- ²⁷ Sharman Macdonald, *When We Were Women* in *Sharman Macdonald: Plays One* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).
- ²⁸ Sharman Macdonald, *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, p. 8.
- ²⁹ Sharman Macdonald, *When We Were Women*, p. 145.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 97.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 103.
- ³² Idem.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 102.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 145.
- ³⁵ *The Times*, 16 March 1995, p. 30.
- ³⁶ Transcript of a phone interview with Sharman Macdonald, 12 April 1997, p. 3.
- ³⁷ Peter Zenzinger, 'The New Wave', p. 135.
- ³⁸ Sharman Macdonald, *The Winter Guest*, p. 184.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 251.
- ⁴⁰ Idem.
- ⁴¹ Idem.
- ⁴² Sharman Macdonald, 'Introduction' to *Sharman Macdonald: Plays One*, pp. viii-ix.
- ⁴³ Sharman Macdonald, *The Winter Guest*, p. 185.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 196.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

Chapter Six

Storytelling and Herstories: Analysis of Female Identity in Three

Plays by Rona Munro

6.1. *About the playwright*

Rona Munro was born in Aberdeen in 1959. She graduated history from Edinburgh University where she specialised early and medieval Scottish history, oral literature and popular tradition.

Her first play, *Fugue*, was commissioned and performed by the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 1983. The play was subsequently performed at several venues in Britain and the USA, and published by Salamander Press in 1983 and Nick Hern Books in 1985.

In 1985 and 1986 she was the writer-in-residence with Paines Plough Theatre Company, and since 1985 she has been regularly giving workshops in drama and writing skills with community groups, women's groups, schools and universities.

Munro's work ranges from stage plays, television and radio plays, to plays written for youth and community theatre and includes: *Piper's Cave* (1985), *The Way to Go Home* (1987), *Saturday at the Commodore* (1989), *Bold Girls* (1990), *Your Turn to Clean the Stairs* (1992), and *The Maiden Stone* (1994). Munro currently works as a

literary associate at Hampstead Theatre in London and is working on a commission for the Royal Court Theatre, London.

6.2. *About this chapter*

In the telephone interview with Rona Munro, she indicated two areas that she is particularly interested to explore in her writing. The first area comprises female identity issues 'in a broader sense', ¹ where Munro looks at a woman's role and given choices in the private and public spheres. It transpires that she is particularly interested to show the falsity of the concept which defines womanhood as biologically determined. In all three plays which are under scrutiny in this chapter the intention is to show how Munro treats female identity as a socially induced rather than a biological determination. However, while she agrees that female identity is a social construct, she also urges that the choices women have been given are also dependent on their biological makeup, and that it is not possible to separate the two factors. This attitude is most clearly laid out in *The Maiden Stone*, where the destinies of the three women of different backgrounds in the nineteenth century are carefully explored.

Interestingly, rather than trying to avoid being labelled, Munro openly calls herself a feminist author. She explains that feminism has been given too 'narrow [a] definition in a pejorative sense or an academic sense', ² neither of which speak from real women's experience. In Munro's words, one lives in 'a culture which made the male experience visible, but not the female experience, not as women themselves would recognise it'. ³ Therefore, she rejects the belief that feminism has run its due course

and stipulates that feminism is still very much in vogue because it has ability to look at, reveal and fight against a world in which 'women [are] represented and treated as a mass, denied anything but the most limited choices, rendered invisible by the absence of any presentation of themselves in language, culture or public life'.⁴

The second area comprises storytelling and folk myths. Of the five authors discussed in this project, Rona Munro's writing is closest to the tradition of storytelling and folk balladry. In her plays, she often uses old folk tales and myths and turns them on their head to show how those stories have been used as restricting agents by the patriarchal system. Among the folk images which recur in her writing are, for example, the earth imagery associating a woman with Mother Earth. In the 'Introduction' to Clarissa Pinkola Estes's *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, the author proposes that '[The Wild Woman] comes to us through music that vibrates the sternum, excites the heart; it comes through the drum, the whistle, the call, the cry'.⁵ In other words, woman is represented as a liberated and liberating force who comes to us through the sounds of nature - river, rain, wind - as an echo of the earth. In congruence with the earth imagery, Munro also uses animal imagery such as 'rabbit', 'tiger' or 'wolf'. There is, for example, a number of allusions to the howling of wolves in her plays. The third kind of imagery which Munro often uses in her playwriting is food imagery, which will be mentioned in this chapter. As has already been shown in previous chapters, earth, animal and food imagery are linked with female sexuality which is correspondingly perceived as olfactory and predatory. This study strives to show how Munro uses such imagery in exploration of female identity in her plays.

Furthermore, significant attention will be given to Munro's use of dramatic language. Munro's language is fluid, with a poetic quality which derives from its storytelling roots, and the author's imaginative use of a variety of speech modes, from standard English and Northern Irish, to Scots. This study will explore the significance of the imagery and speech modes that Munro uses for the four recurring themes: a woman's position in society, a woman's sexuality, interaction between language and power relationships and self-expression through art. This will be investigated on the basis of examples from the following three plays: *Fugue* (1983), *Bold Girls* (1990) and *The Maiden Stone* (1994).

6.3. *Fugue* (1983)

Fugue is a play about teenage angst, about the time in one's life when one suffers from acute anxieties about one's identity, deepened further by the awakening of one's sexuality and one's ignorance of adult social games. The main protagonist, Kay, has been found in the woods, in acute mental distress (the state which the psychiatrists call the fugue), and admitted to the psychiatric ward of a hospital. The story is told from the perspectives of Kay and a young Psychiatrist who tries to help her. The Psychiatrist fails in her attempts and the play ends with Kay's death.

In the interview, Munro mentioned two among other possible sources upon which she drew inspiration for *Fugue*. Firstly, in writing the play, Munro relied on her own experience of growing up and understanding both the feelings inside her and the world outside. For example, Kay, like Munro herself when she was sixteen, suffers from a bogus cancer scare. Secondly, Munro mentioned a book by Ursula Leguine which she had read as a teenager, about a character who was chased by a shadow which turned out to be the shadow of himself.

In *Fugue*, the story of Kay, a young woman who falls victim to a hallucination and dies from trauma in a mental institution, is told in the form of a tale from two different perspectives, Kay's and a young psychiatrist's who treats her. Munro explores the disintegration of Kay's identity by splitting her character in a similar way to, for example, Olwen Wymark's splitting of Verity's consciousness in *Find Me*. Kay's character is divided into four different facets who tell her story from their unique perspectives. Kay 1 is a 24 year old secretary who is currently recovering in a mental institution from fugue, a nervous disorder induced by mental breakdown which compels its victims to walk aimlessly for hours. Kay 2 is Kay 1's memory, the reconstruction of the event which caused Kay 1's breakdown. By the end of the play the remaining two characters, Ghost and Psychiatrist are identified as the same person, the haunting shadow of Kay 1's internal desires and needs which remain unsatisfied and to some extent feared by her because she does not understand them. Psychiatrist is Kay 1's reversed mirror image. For example, in the character list Kay 1 is depicted as 'a secretary, [a]bout 24, frightened and depressed', ⁶ while Psychiatrist is depicted as '[a]bout 24-25, [s]elf-confident and successful'. ⁷ This interpretation may be corroborated by the author's note that Ghost and Psychiatrist should be played by the same actress, by the fact that Psychiatrist is Kay 1's namesake, and by constant jumps in time between the present and the past in the interaction between consciousness and subconsciousness which struggle for domination over Kay's mind.

The anxieties that Kay feels about her everyday life and its drudgery are revealed in this play through the use of diverse imagery. Munro uses window and mirror imagery

in order to show Kay's dissatisfaction with her situation. In the beginning of act I, Kay 1 contemplates her life as a succession of lost, never fulfilled opportunities:

KAY 1. Sometimes I think my life has just been a succession of windows. School, college, other jobs... Grubby windows with broken Venetian blinds and the drone of French verbs being conjugated over and over. The fan glass of what was once a Georgian mansion, looking out at a green statue of Prince Albert now covered in bird shit, my fingers type dancing the time away... (act I, scene i, p. 79)

This vain looking at life passing outside one's window places Kay in a double role of an object in other people's gaze and a voyeur into other people's lives. Her objectivisation is represented by the reference to the monotony of her work and the animation of objects around her. She refers to herself as a 'fresh, young and nubile [bride]' ⁸ of a franking machine, an 'overweight, farting geriatric who [eats] paper' ⁹ and to whom she is tied forever in 'some kind of obscene arranged marriage'. ¹⁰ The solitude of her confined basement work space contributes to her resentment at being watched and the need to remove herself from the world. In act I, Kay 2 is shown looking at herself in the mirror and tugging at her hair, combing it:

KAY 2. (...) I feel pretty, oh so pretty, I feel pretty and witty and... yeuch! (*Examines plook.*) (...) Don't worry Kay dear, no-one's going to see you, not a soul. (act I, scene I, p. 78)

Looking at herself in the mirror represents Kay's scrutiny of her life. Kay 2 plays around with the image of a pretty, intelligent woman, which is the image of the feminine perpetuated in popular literature and rejected by women writers like Liz Lochhead and Marcella Evaristi. It soon transpires that Kay feels increasingly

uncomfortable with that image. She is deeply dissatisfied with the standstill in her career, depressed over the break-up with her boyfriend, and troubled by a fluke cancer-scare that she had gone through. These pressurise her into choosing to escape from society as a way of dealing with everyday problems.

Several theorists have already been mentioned in this study with regard to the idea that a woman's experience is being ignored in patriarchal societies, and her physical person being made invisible. In most of the previous examples this invisibility is symbolic, however, here, Kay physically removes herself from society. She hides in the woods where she used to spend holidays with her parents as a child in an attempt to recapture the happiness of those early years and perhaps to alleviate her present situation.

This is not to say that Munro suggests that we live in the culture 'that makes only the male experience visible'¹¹ in order to condemn all men as oppressors whose 'very existence made victims of all women'.¹² In her opinion it is far more liberating to grasp the whole range of experiences in order to

show real women, real men and dilemmas that have a reality beyond the narrow confines of anyone's personal obsessions. Power between men and women on a personal level is a much more complicated thing than any sweeping generalizations about the nature of society.¹³

In *Fugue* she shows the consequences of those sweeping generalizations in her chilling portrayal of Kay's mental and emotional deterioration. By splitting Kay's mind into several characters Munro shows Kay's confusion about her identity. Similarly, her sexuality is perceived as alien to her, as something that originates from the outside,

rather than from within her. For example, Kay's growing sexual awareness coincides with her seeing an apparition of a man in a medieval castle. In act I she confesses that she has seen things on other occasions, culminating in an encounter with the Ghost during her holiday in the woods. In this sense, the apparition of the Ghost can be interpreted in terms of the resurfacing of thoughts, feelings and urges that Kay has repressed deeply into her subconsciousness. Kay's inner conflict with her sexuality and the awareness of self is expressed through diverse imagery, such as nature, animal and hunger imagery.

The proposition that nature imagery in the play underscores Kay's growing awareness of the changes in her body, from girlhood to womanhood, can be discussed based on two quotations from *Fugue*.

When speaking of her childhood memories, Kay feels empowered, capable of doing and being/becoming anything:

KAY 1. It was a beautiful summer. The last time I was here. The air was full, light and seeds everywhere. Mist in the morning, dancing midges in the evening. (...) I lay and looked at it all and dreamed about my future. The places I was going to go. The people I would meet. How it was going to feel. I could be anything. Anything. (act I, scene i, pp. 80-1)

Nature is presented as a tactile and sensual force which brings about a false sense of liberation and empowerment.

KAY 1. Drenched four warm limbs in cold air. A small wood. It was my forest... dead leaves, black, damp, halfway to earth, smell like spice...

KAY 2. This is where I was an outlaw... this is where I was an Indian with a twisted bow... this is where I was a tiger...

KAY 1. A pine branch, a spray of sharp water in my face. The old paths are still here. Eight years. It's a different generation of rabbits keeping them clear. I'm too broad to get down them untangled, I don't quite fit...

KAY 2 (*noticing it*). The cave.

KAY 1. Not a real cave, a hollow under ancient roots of broom, big enough to crouch in... stuff myself with hoarded food, write curses in fake blood for posterity. (act I, scene i, p. 80)

When describing the proliferation of nature, Kay mentions the seeds which represent man's procreative power. Similarly, when referring to the forest as hers, she is talking about female sexuality. 'Dead leaves, black and damp'¹⁴ symbolise pubic hair; they are 'halfway to earth',¹⁵ that is, to the vagina, which carries the 'smell of spice'.¹⁶ Munro also mentions an image of a cave which represents a womb, showing how a woman's role in society is closely linked with the concepts of procreation and motherhood. Thus an empty cave has come to signify a barren, childless womb. Both Kays are unmarried young women, due to the break-up with a boyfriend and due to commitment to a career respectively. Munro constantly reminds the readers/audience of the choices that women are given, and the consequences of making those choices. She refuses to define women only with respect to their biological function of motherhood. In her article 'Sex and Food' she made it clear that as a woman playwright she initially rejected exploring women's issues because they were often associated with 'messy, sticky, biological things, babies and blood and gingerbread with no relevance, interest or importance in the real world'.¹⁷ It took her a long time to realise that those 'sticky biological things actually define[d] what we [were] and that attempts to evade that realization [led] us down the blind allies where a large part of our culture [had] taken

us and lost us'.¹⁸ For example, the fear of being labelled by one's biological function only is hinted at in Kay's fear of cancer:

KAY 1. So my skin isn't immune to scalpels and tumours?
Whose is? I thought I'd found the seeds of death inside me, who
doesn't carry them? (...) (act I, scene ii, p. 94)

A breast is a biologically significant part of a woman's body as the source of nourishment for a newborn. A mastectomy therefore represents denial of motherhood and rejection of a blind, choiceless procreative urge that has been imposed upon her and by which she has been chased in her childhood nightmares in the shape of a headless rabbit.

The image of a rabbit is an explicit metaphor for sexuality. It is usually associated with male sexuality and potency. There are elements in *Fugue* that support this idea. For example, Kay's father lulls her to sleep with stories about rabbits. Patriarchal ideology is fed to the children through bedtime stories and fairytales in order to determine specific gender relations at an early age. As a young child, Kay eats her puppet rabbit in a symbolic acceptance of paternal ideology which promotes passivity and inferiority as attributes of a woman's status.

KAY 1. When I was two, I still had a cot. My father dropped
me in it, me in my stretch nylon pyjamas with little yellow animals all
over them, and talked me to sleep, with stories about rabbits.

KAY 2. When I was two I was given a large cuddly rabbit of
my own.

KAY 1. I ate it. Right down to the little plastic rose.

KAY 2. When I was two we went to the cottage for the first
time. I saw real rabbits for the first time.

KAY 1. They weren't at all what I expected. (act I, scene ii, p.
90)

During their first visit to the woods, Kay catches a glimpse of her budding sexuality. Her realisation that female and male sexualities, and indeed worldviews, differ, is hinted at in her surprised statement that '[real rabbits] were not at all what she expected'.¹⁹ The clash between stories and real life has left a void, and created confusion that will make a grown-up Kay admit that '[she doesn't] quite... fit'.²⁰ This admission is the central point of the play. Once they become aware of discrepancies between reality and the patriarchal ideology that has been fed to them, women's attempts to rectify the situation are seen as threatening. Society punishes such breaches of the norm by taking away all power from such women and branding them as mad. Kay's realisation that her life has been running in circles is seen as a mental breakdown because 'it's easier to think of [her] as unstable... more comfortable all round',²¹ in the same way that Lady Grange's nonsubmissive nature is equated with madness in Sue Glover's *The Straw Chair*. Munro refers to the concept of female sexuality as threatening to patriarchal ideology when she associates it with animal imagery such as 'tiger'²² and 'wolf'.²³ However, the Kay whom we meet at the beginning of the play is not an empowered Kay who is aware of her needs and potentials, but a frightened and confused young woman who has fallen in the crack between a child's dreams and expectations, and an adult's recognition that these dreams and expectations can never be fulfilled. The feeling of waste and inability to cross the boundaries of imposed conventions is expressed by the hunger metaphor. Kay feels left out, and her life is pervaded by

this strange feeling, just the first seconds before [she] [gets] out of bed... Like a hunger, but every bit of [her], every cell of [her]'s hungry - [her] mouth to be filled, [her] eyes to cry or laugh, all [her]

skin itches to be touched, to move, to stretch... and nothing will ever be enough (act I, scene i, p. 80)

The hunger that Kay is referring to is a physical hunger as well as a hunger for outside stimuli, love and change. It is also a hunger for a sense of purpose. In act I Kay reflects upon the fragility and fortuity of human life:

KAY 1. It's not my job, it's me. It's all of it. It's my life. Idling down the plughole, second by second...

KAY 2. I could get run over by a bus tomorrow. (*Smiles*) (...) No but listen, I mean it! If I did who'd notice? What difference would it make? There I'd be wandering along, thinking about who I was going to have for tea, or what I wanted to do at the weekend, or how I was going to be world famous one day, and then 'splat!' I'd be a smear on the tarmac and a few fantasies vanishing into the ether. Don't you see? (...) It makes everything pointless. Everything. We're wasting time.

KAY 1. Do I believe that? (*Frowns, considering it.*) Sometimes I enjoy playing lonely and misunderstood you know?

KAY 2. This is different. This is real. (*Light fades on KAY 2 in bed*)

KAY 1. Oh no. Don't drag all this up. Don't. I don't want to think about it. Don't! (*The GHOST walks over to the bed. She hums 'Queen Mary'.*)

KAY 2. (*Wakes up*) Jesus...? (*Stares at GHOST*)

GHOST. (*Gentle*) Kay.

KAY 2. What are you? What's going on?

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 2. I'm dreaming. It's a dream.

GHOST. Hungry. *I'm* hungry. (act I, scene i, p. 86)

Kay is aware of the monotony of her existence, but her feelings and needs, personified in the physical presence of the Ghost, frighten her. She negates them by drawing upon the world picture that was taught to her in childhood. However, as the flaws in this ideology begin to surface, her conscious mind slowly loses battle with her subconsciousness. This is represented later in the same scene when the Ghost grabs her hand to stop her from switching on the light. The battle of light and dark is the

battle between the conscious and the subconscious minds for domination. Kay is afraid of the dark; that is, she is afraid of what she may uncover about herself under the mask that she wears of a rationalised and socialised individual. This fear is founded on the realisation that one is not in control of one's own destiny. In this sense, when Kay refers to the 'seeds', ²⁴ she is not referring only to the procreative force behind the image. The 'seeds', ²⁵ for example, are also associated with death, as when Kay calls the lumps on her breast the 'seeds of death'. ²⁶ Similarly, she voices her anxiety about the fact that nothing and nobody are safe.

KAY 2. (*Hesitating, distressed*) When I was two... my father... he talked me to sleep with a bedtime story... He talked away the dark.

KAY 1. ... and I fell asleep, safe in the shadows and his voice...

KAY 1. Creeping through the wood, I was a tiger... a hunter... Running...

KAY 2. (*Trying to force the words out*) And I saw, I saw...

KAY 1. A rabbit.

KAY 2. It had no head. Oh Mum! It had no head!

KAY 1. And I ran, hunted, to escape what ate the rabbit... not the fox or cat, but the force that moved their killing jaws and fed their hunger...

KAY 2. (*Frantic*) And it could eat me... It could! (act II, scene ii, p. 119)

The father represents both a physical father who tells bedtime stories to his daughter, and Our Father in Heaven, in the shadow of whose voice one sleeps safely. The religious and familial iconography provides the self-confidence and comfort that Kay needs; she feels protected and empowered in her belief that she is in charge. This belief is shown in her description of herself as 'a tiger' ²⁷ and 'a hunter', ²⁸ which gives her 'running' ²⁹ a definite purpose. When, during a daily walk in the forest, she experiences an outwardly insignificant encounter with a rabbit's carcass ravaged by a

wild animal, it makes her realise that her feelings of security and purpose have been illusory. This realisation makes her call out to her mother, in symbolic removal from paternal ideology and into the realm of the feminine. However, by rejecting her father's ideology, she automatically removes herself from a position of power into one of powerlessness (a dichotomy similar to the public and private spheres dichotomy mentioned in the earlier chapters). In the relationship between Kay and the Psychiatrist there are elements of Deborah Tannen's and Deborah Cameron's concepts which imply that rather than competing with men in the traditional power-structure, women should exercise their right to be different without being unequal to men. The two young women are both of the same age, they have the same eyes, the same name and the same memories, however, their circumstances are radically different. While Kay has an assumed submissive position in the social hierarchy as her father's good little girl who thrives on her father's attention, Psychiatrist is a representative of young educated women who feel the need to compete with men in order to assert themselves in the public sphere. The common denominator is that both women's sense of empowerment and purpose is induced by the paternal ideology and is therefore illusory. The sense of the fortuity of human existence is strengthened by the image of Kay and the Ghost shuffling cards, playing with them, and reading their fortunes.

The earth and animal imagery that Munro profusely uses in *Fugue* comes from the folk tradition. Indeed, Munro frequently makes use of old Scottish ballads and fairy tales in her plays, turning them on their heads to expose the fallacious ideas behind them. For example, *Fugue* begins with a girl's voice singing an ancient Scottish ballad 'Queen Mary':

Dark. A GIRL's VOICE is singing, far away:
 Queen Mary, Queen Mary my age is sixteen
 My faither's a fermer on yonder green.
 He's plenty o' money tae dress me sae braw
 But there's nae bonny laddie will tak me awa. (act II, scene ii, pp.
 120-1)

The image of a sweet sixteen, pure and innocent girl, which is perpetuated in this ballad, is turned on its head in Munro's portrayal of Kay's growing-up as a bundle of messy confusion. The innocence and enthusiasm of Kay's teenage years is sharply contrasted with the disillusion of her adulthood. The image of an innocent girl faced with a big bad world is repeated throughout the play. It is the image of the feminine from the male perspective which is removed from Kay's perception of herself. She refers to this when she talks about how she is perceived by the community after her ordeal. In order to illustrate her point Munro chooses yet another fairy tale image, that of Little Red Riding Hood:

KAY: There's been a lot of speculation about what I 'saw'... I don't see why I have to talk about it, still... It seems an idea that appeals to everyone, poor defenseless young girl in lonely cottage preyed on by something wild and woolly from the woods and I quote believe it or not. *I love those woods.* (act I, scene i, p. 75)

'Everyone' from the above quotation refers to the patriarchal system which perpetuates an image of the feminine as defenseless and pure. The 'woods'³⁰ refers to sexuality, and 'wild and woolly'³¹ to the world's corruption which threatens to destroy the young woman's purity. Munro exposes this fallacy in Kay's last sentence ('*I love those woods*'),³² which shows that rather than being afraid of life, Kay yearns for it.

It has already been mentioned that Munro tries to show the process of fragmentation of a woman's experience by splitting Kay's character. Kay 1 and Kay 2 have become the representations of Kay's present and past, the Ghost has become a representation of Kay's subconscious fears and urges, while Psychiatrist, whose lifestyle equals with the one Kay is trying to live up to, has taken up the role of a doppelganger. Munro's experimentation does not stop at characterisation though, she goes further to fragment the play's structure and language. The play is divided into two acts where the story is presented from two different perspectives. In act I the reasons for Kay's ending up in the hospital and the actual event in the woods are told by Kay herself. Rather than being told linearly, her story is interwoven with eruptions of her memory and the physical presence of the Ghost who, as we have already established, represents her subconscious mind. There is a powerful rhythm in the interaction between Kay 1 and Kay 2, which sometimes borders on the operatic:

KAY 1. (...) All my close friends, old friends had sort of... gone... like I'd sat still and watched them all dash past and vanish over the horizon... running for other jobs, other towns, other friends... going abroad...

KAY 2. Saudi Arabia.

KAY 1. (...) ... and nothing will ever be *enough*.

KAY 2. (*Interrupting suddenly and decisively*) Breakfast. (act I, scene i, p. 80)

This example shows how Kay's train of thought is constantly interrupted by fragments of Kay's memory. In the first case, her memory serves as a reminder that all of her hypothetical talk of lost friendships and opportunities is rooted in a personal event which has left a mark on her, the break-up with her boyfriend who had accepted a job offer in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, in the second case, her memory serves to fulfil a more

practical function of telling her that while it might not satisfy all of her needs, a hefty breakfast will at least fill her belly for the time being. In this sense her memory comments on Kay's version of the story, as if to expose Kay's self-deception. These comments are given in the form of interruptions, as indicated in the above example, or in the form of repetitions so as to emphasise the meanings of particular words in a sentence, as in this example:

KAY 1. (...) it was that first day... I went out.
 KAY 2. Out. (act I, scene i, p. 80)

It is important to note that most of the action is contained in the language, which may remind one of Lochhead's proposition that language equals action in plays authored by women. This emphasis on language - and how words are uttered - gives a new dimension to movement - such as shuffling of cards obtains the symbolic meaning of the revaluation of one's life. Munro alternates long monologues, in which the unfulfilled possibilities of past childhood are lamented, with snappy exchanges between various facets of Kay's personality. This alternation, alongside the change in Kay's outer appearance, is at the core of Munro's construction of Kay's slow mental and emotional deterioration. Gradually, Kay's long emotional eruptions give place to short fragmented thoughts, driven by her resignation, and finally to silence.

In the second act of the play the storytelling function is taken over by Psychiatrist, while Kay remains a passive powerless object of examination. Indeed, at the moment when the second act begins, Kay is already dead and the events are recounted from Psychiatrist's memory. Psychiatrist's perspective oscillates between a cold medical

recount of Kay's case history and a more personalised attempt to explain that whatever happened was not Psychiatrist's fault. In the scenes where Psychiatrist remembers her conversation with Kay it becomes obvious that Psychiatrist is in control, for her long monologues and medical jargon overlap Kay's short fragmented sentences. Psychiatrist's language changes and becomes more reflective as her attitude towards Kay's story changes. She loses medicinal jargon as the play progresses and her relationship with Kay becomes more personal.

At the end of the play, Psychiatrist muses upon the circumstances which brought about Kay's untimely death, caused by trauma, wondering whether there was a time when these circumstances could have been avoided:

PSYCHIATRIST. (...) It all comes to the same thing, she's dead, what does 'why' matter?
 It all comes to the same thing in the end.
 What difference does it make?
 What did she see? Me. Same age, same eyes, same name, same memories... different sets of accidents. (*Shrugs*) She saw things. Maybe that showed her something more. I don't know. I don't understand any of it. It changes everything. Maybe I'll change my job. I've got to get away by myself, sort things out. It changes everything. That's what I felt looking down at her surprised dead face, shock, not that something like this could happen at all but that it could happen to me. You never think it will do you?
 I feel I want to move, change names, job, everything. All the people and places that were so comfortable and familiar suddenly look alike. Like something in a nightmare, as if she left me her way of looking at them sideways... I've got to move, to run, to *live* past this somehow, I *must*... but I don't see how. I've fallen over a cliff I didn't know was there. I can see Kay lying at the bottom... but I'm still falling. (act I, scene i, p. 121)

In this last speech, Psychiatrist shows her awareness of the schism between the way she sees herself and an image of herself as seen by the others. To mend this schism she

must unknow what she has known, separate herself from the false sense of security and the misrepresentation of herself by the community. Munro does not offer solutions. There is a sense of inevitability in the respective situations of the two women, a sense that a change might bring momentary alleviation but not permanent solutions. The choices that the women are given in society are limited. Munro compares them to the choices that a person is left with while falling over a cliff; whichever way one decides there is always one inevitable ending. This idea will be elaborated further in the analysis of Munro's other two plays, *Bold Girls* and *The Maiden Stone*.

6.4. *Bold Girls* (1990)

The play deals with two days in the lives of four working-class women in war-torn Belfast. Nora and her daughter Cassie constantly bicker about their different attitudes with regard to the family life. Cassie dreams of leaving Belfast, even at the expense of abandoning her children, and plans to fund her trip with the money which she has stolen from her mother. Their neighbour Marie is a young widow with two children, who has built her life around the memory of her late husband Michael. Michael was killed by the British forces. In her mind, Michael is a hero, a faithful and loving husband and father. This idealised picture of a man is about to be destroyed by Cassie's confessing to Michael having affairs with her and other women, and by the appearance of Deirdre, Michael's teenage daughter from an illicit affair. The things will reach the boiling point when Deirdre steals Cassie's savings which she has hidden behind Michael's picture in Marie's kitchen. Cassie's and Marie's relationship will change, on account of Cassie's confession, and Marie will face Michael's treachery, and accept his illicit daughter.

As with *Fugue*, in her 1990 play *Bold Girls*, commissioned by 7:84 Scottish People's Theatre and first produced at Cumbernauld Theatre, in September 1990, Munro sets out to explore the fragmentation of woman's experience and to disclose the self-

deception that arises from passive acceptance of man's truth. The play came into being after one of Munro's visits to Belfast:

David Hayman was the director at 7:84 and he wanted to commission me to write the play about the women in Ireland which I took terribly seriously. I thought to write about all women in all Ireland in all decades in all hundred years. And I actually spent quite a lot of time in Belfast, my brother was working there at the time, and I'd gone over to work with the community theatre group, and meet friends there, and I continued my work there trying to do some very formal research about women in Ireland. I had to write about both sides that were divided and at the end of the day I'd just come from a night spent with my mates drinking a lot (*laughs*). When I came back and tried to write a play I thought, well that was the research, that was the story (...) just particular experiences that women themselves have had.³³

To focus on the exploration of woman's alternative truth, which has often been hidden and seldom openly discussed, Munro chooses to work with an all-female cast, similar to Glover in *Bondagers*. When she was asked, in an interview about the 7:84 production of *Bold Girls* at Hampstead, whether it was an anti-male play since all male protagonists were absent from the stage and seen through the women's eyes, she rejected this idea as constricting. After all, claims Munro, 'it was (...) a story about women and not about men'.³⁴ With regard to the allegations about an anti-male element in the story she commented that such a judgment would be true 'if only you believe[d] men [weren't] capable of change or that the worst represent[ed] the whole, personally I've got more faith in people than that'.³⁵ In Munro's view, the absence of men from the stage simply mirrors the reality of the community since most of them are 'away, (...) they are either in prison or they're dead, so that they're gone away (...) there are only women and kids (...)'.³⁶ This view is illustrated in Marie's speech in scene i:

MARIE. (...) You have to imagine the four of them. All men you'd look at twice one way or another. Michael, my husband, because he had that strong feel to him. You felt it in the back of your neck when he came in a room. People turned to look without knowing why, Davey, my brother now, you'd look again but you'd say, what's that wee boy doing in his Daddy's jacket. Nineteen and he looks more like nine, though they've put age in his eyes for him now. He's got old eyes now. Martin, Cassie's brother, you'd look and you'd cross the street in case he caught your eye and decided he didn't like the look of *you*, he's got the kind of eyebrows that chop short conversations, slamming a glower on his face like two fists hitting a table... and Joe, Cassie's husband. You'd look at him to see what the joke was, Joe's always laughing, Joe's always where the crack is. Davey's in the Kesh. Martin's in the Kesh. Joe's in the Kesh... and Michael is dead. (scene I, p. 215)

Munro is aware that the removal of men from the stage may add to their significance in the lives of the female protagonists. It is this significance that Munro sets out to explore, and the ways in which the women have been affected by the men's absence. In an intricate portrayal of the four women of different age groups, Munro shows a gradual process of development of the sense of one's individual identity, and of seizing the authorship of one's own story. In other words, while in the beginning of the play all the characters see themselves through men's eyes, and their perception of themselves is tailor-made by the patriarchal working class ideology, by the end of the play they will abandon this false position, by stripping away the self-delusions upon which their lives have been based. As in *Fugue*, there is an urge for change as the only way to survive, as well as a need to find and express the truth from their unique perspective.

In *Bold Girls*, Rona Munro abandons a fragmented stream-of-consciousness structure and moves towards a chronologically structured plot, in which the secrets in the lives of the four women are revealed against the background of war-torn Belfast. The

action takes place in the course of twenty-four hours, from one afternoon to dawn of the following morning. It is divided into three scenes which are set in two locations - Marie's kitchen and the local club. Scenes i and iii take place in Marie's kitchen, while scene ii is set in a local club. Those locations represent the private (woman's) and the public (man's) spheres' separation line and serve as a clear definition of a woman's role in a Belfast working class community. Munro uses the separation line between two spheres, and the conventional imagery, to portray four very different female protagonists who, nevertheless, have one thing in common. They are all affected by patriarchal ideology which has been fed to them through their familial and religious upbringing, and which is here referred to as the 'man's truth'. In the course of her search for a woman's truth, Munro touches upon some of the themes that have already been examined in the work of the other four authors, such as the perception of identity, motherhood, the mother-daughter relationship and woman's sexuality. These themes will be considered in this chapter, alongside analysis of Munro's use of imagery and dialogue.

The shift of action between the two locations enables Munro to investigate the change in the roles and the behaviour of her female protagonists in two different spheres - the private sphere of Marie's household and the public sphere of a local club.

In scene i, Marie's kitchen is depicted as her private space, defined by domestic items such as irons, ironing boards, piles of clothes, toys, pots and pans, and 'stuffed with human bits and pieces, all the clutter of housework and life'.³⁷ This setting is dominated by the pictures on the walls - a small picture of the Virgin, and a large

grainy blow-up photo of Marie's late husband Michael. These pictures are the representations of the two concepts - faith and love - around which Marie has woven her private world, and which in a way define her position within the household as a mother and a wife. As the mistress of the house, Marie is in complete control, she gives orders to her sons, and acts as a mediator in Nora and Cassie's constant disputes. The behaviour of all three characters is assured and confident. There is a sense that they are responsive and supportive of each other's thoughts and ideas. This is due to the fact that they are in their own unbreached space, in which they feel completely comfortable.

Deirdre's sudden appearance represents a breach of this space, and it causes surprise, even awe, because it brings back memories of the past. In her conversation with Cassie, Marie says that there are times when Deirdre reminds her of Michael, and then again, she can feel that the girl is an image of herself:

- CASSIE. Well, who does it look like?
 MARIE. She looks like Michael.
 CASSIE. Sacred Heart!
 MARIE. You know how me and Michael always wanted a little girl.
 CASSIE. I remember.
 MARIE. Then other times... she looks like me.
 CASSIE. But... you're not dead.
 MARIE. Well, you remember that dress I was married in, that wee white mini-dress?
 CASSIE *nods*.
 MARIE. Then when Michael brought me here... I'd never seen it. Even on my wedding day I still thought we were moving into his parents' back room... then he brought me here, asked me how I liked our wee home... and I just stood at the end of the path there and stared...
 MARIE *stops*.
 CASSIE. Yes?
 MARIE. That's where she stands. And stares. (scene i, p. 195)

The image of a young girl in a white dress, standing at the end of the path and staring, brings disquietness into the idyllic memory of Marie's wedding day. It is also a reminder of Marie's hopes and lost opportunities, as well as an indication that both of them have been cheated, in one sense or another, by the same man. While Deirdre has been denied a father figure, Marie has been tricked into the false belief that she has been living in a secure, loving familial relationship. After Michael's death, both women have coped with the loss in their respective ways. Deirdre's urge to find out about her parentage makes her take action, while Marie hides behind the facade of a mourning widow and a dutiful mother. Marie's initial anxiety about the girl's appearance is the first hint that there is something wrong with her self-created domestic haven. In the opening scene, the tranquillity of the domestic setting and the feelings of inner peace and security are disrupted by Deirdre's voice which is projected from the darkness as a reminder of the unsafe world outside:

DEIRDRE. The sun is going down behind the hills, the sky is grey. There's hills at the back there, green. I can't hardly see them because the stones between here and there are grey, the street is grey. Somewhere a bird is singing and falling in the sky. I hear the ice cream van and the traffic and the helicopter overhead. (scene i, p. 187)

Two points can be extracted from Deirdre's monologue. The first point is the author's description of the drudgery of everyday life in a working class district of Belfast. Munro expresses the schism between everyday reality and the characters' perception of reality by means of colours and sounds. The monotony and hardship are represented by extensive use of the colour 'grey';³⁸ the sky is grey, the stones are grey, the street

is grey. Deirdre also mentions 'green',³⁹ the colour of life and hope. However, green is far away, on the hills at the back, hidden behind the greyness of the streets. The characters' dreams of a better life are always presented in strong colours, such as peach and green, as opposed to the greyness of their reality. Munro plays with colours throughout the play. For example, Nora constantly talks about fifteen yards of shiny peach polyester material with which she dreams of redecorating her front room. This peach polyester becomes the major aim in Nora's life, '[her] wee dream'.⁴⁰ When Nora's neighbour is at a loss about what to do after her husband has been taken by British soldiers, Nora advises her to paint the facade of her house in white, the colour which signifies innocence and hope. When we first see Deirdre in scene i, she is dressed in white clothes which will become torn and ragged by scene iii, in order to represent her loss of innocence through gaining knowledge.

Munro also uses sounds to express the characters' feelings of loneliness and hopelessness. In her speech, Deirdre mentions a bird's song in the distance. The image of a bird is repeatedly mentioned in the play. Marie always feeds birds in a maternal caring gesture in the same way in which she cares for her sons and accepts Deirdre. Another two sounds mentioned in Deirdre's speech are those of an ice cream van and a military helicopter, thus blending memories of carefree childhood with more sinister sounds of close-at-hand violence. This brings us to the second point which arises from Deirdre's monologue, namely, that beyond the safe home environment which Marie has created for herself and her children, lurks an insecure cold reality.

This reality which lurks in the corner is personified in Deirdre's character. Deirdre's sudden arrival infringes upon the privacies of the other characters and makes them reassess the illusions upon which their lives have been built. She intrudes into Marie's territory to claim what she believes is hers - her identity, the right to her father's name. In her noncompromising search for truth she bursts the imaginary safe bubble of the remaining three characters. Firstly, by hints and by stealing Cassie's money she makes Cassie confess to Marie her affair with Marie's late husband. She further makes her realise that her (Cassie's) dreams of leaving can never come true. Secondly, she forces Marie to finally face the facts about her married life and her husband's death, and to move on with her life. Thirdly, in an act of vandalism, she destroys Nora's 'wee dream' by tearing her peach polyester material. By doing so, she destroys the comfortable facade which Nora has built around her, and opens a canful of worms regarding Nora's relationship with her late husband and her children. In this way, Deirdre makes these three characters take off their rose-tinted glasses and face reality free of any illusion.

Scene ii is set in the public sphere of a local club, a male-dominated space in which the women are welcome as long as they obey the ground-rules. The free-flow of the conversation which dominated scene i is now disrupted and steered towards a sharper antagonistic dialogue of a man-style-pecking-order kind. It is interesting to observe here the change in the female protagonists' behaviour and use of language. They go to the club on their own, one of them being substantially older to fulfil the traditional function of chaperon. They are seated together, away from male company, at a table which overlooks the dancing floor, close to its central position but still marginalised

from it. There is a substantial change in their clothing. They have been dolled up for the occasion, following the rules of the social game, which places women in the position of an object in the male gaze.

Their behaviour is now also substantially different. Nora assumes the role of a matron. She criticises the behaviour of the younger women, as well as acting protectively towards them. Marie's pep and self-confidence have disappeared. She feels uncomfortable in the male-dominated sphere, and remains seated for as long as she can, so as not to draw unnecessary attention to herself. When she is drawn out of her corner she acts awkwardly, clumsily. She does not talk much, and acts almost apologetically for being there and in the space which is not her own. Unlike Marie, Cassie's behaviour and language become more aggressive. Her whole appearance cries out for attention. Her dress is 'quite revealing though not extravagantly so', ⁴¹ and she often curses. This causes Nora's fierce criticism which threatens to escalate into an open conflict:

CASSIE. To the bold girls.
 NORA. And who are they?
 CASSIE. That's us.
 NORA. There's only one bold girl here, Cassie Ryan, and she's broadcasting it to the world.
 CASSIE. What do you mean?
 NORA. What do you think I mean?
 CASSIE. Well I don't know, Mummy, that's why I'm asking.
 NORA. And you with your man inside.
 CASSIE. And what about him?
 NORA. What about you?
 MARIE. Oh look do you see B.T. and that other boy looking over here? What's on their mind do you think?
 NORA. Oh we're great entertainment tonight, Marie.
 CASSIE. Mummy if there's something on your mind, would you just out and say it please?

MARIE. (*Looking out past the dance floor.*) Oh here's Jimmy going to call out the numbers. Have you got your tickets, girls?
 CASSIE. Come on!
 MARIE. Cassie, you've got them all in your bag there.
 CASSIE. All what?
 MARIE. Come on down, he's calling out the numbers.
 CASSIE. Oh... right. (*She rummages in her bag.*) (scene ii, pp. 219-20)

The conflict between Nora and Cassie goes deeper than just about the braless dress Cassie is sporting; it is about competition for the dominant position in their relationship. This competition is reflected in Nora and Cassie's interaction, in the sense that Cassie's toast ('To the bold girls.')⁴² is challenged by Nora ('And who are they?').⁴³ The challenge is not taken on straight away, as with an unruffled answer, Cassie tries to retain the equilibrium in the interaction. She is challenged once again, this time by an open accusation with regard to her behaviour. This time the challenge is accepted and an innocent pub conversation turns into a verbal conflict, with both interactional parties unwilling to back down. As the verbal duel threatens to escalate, Marie assumes the role of a mediator by changing the subject and in this way she forces Cassie to back down.

As has already been mentioned, Nora and Cassie's conflict is about the dominant position in their relationship, reflected by the struggle for a dominant position in the communicational hierarchy. However, it is also about the unwritten but clearly defined codes about female social behaviour, as opposed to male social behaviour, which Cassie has transgressed. Munro plays with the word 'bold',⁴⁴ which can signify both the courage to rise above one's situation in the face of everyday violence, and morally loose behaviour. It is obvious that while Cassie is referring to the former meaning of

the word, Nora alludes to the latter. Apart from their different standpoints with regard to a woman's social role, the conflict between Cassie and Nora mostly arises from Cassie's need for attention and recognition by both her mother and her father:

CASSIE. My Mummy taught me how to raise my family. How to love them, how to spoil them. Spoil the wee girls with housework and reproaches, the length of their skirts and the colour of their lips: how they sit, how they slouch, how they don't give their fathers peace, how they talk, how they talk back, how they'll come to no good if they carry on like that. They're bold and bad and broken at fourteen but you love them as you love yourself... that's why you hurt them so much.

Ruin the boys, tell them they're noisy and big and bold and their boots are too muddy, ('Clear that mess up for me Cassie.') Tell them to leave their fathers in peace and come to their Mummy for a cuddle, tell them they'll always be your own wee man, always your own bold wee man and you love them better than you love their Daddy, you love them best of all... that's why they hurt you so much. (scene ii, p. 225)

Cassie refers to the double standard in the upbringing, where the boys are raised as 'apples of their mother's eyes', ⁴⁵ while the girls are taught to take second place and tend to their fathers' and brothers' needs. Cassie has rebelled against this upbringing, and strives to assert herself in Nora's eyes as her brother's equal. When her mother accuses her of bringing shame on the family, Cassie feistily replies that she would not be the first one. From the following argument with her mother, it transpires how resentful Cassie is of the double standard rooted in her traditional upbringing, and which condones sexual prowess in the men, but condemns it in their female counterparts:

CASSIE. Our Martin was never too good at keeping his belt buckle fastened, was he?

NORA. Your brother was a good boy, the best boy a mother ever...!

CASSIE. *(Interrupts)* Well, you tell that to the wee girl in Turf Lodge.

(...)

NORA. That was not Martin's child.

CASSIE. Oh it just borrowed that nose and that red hair off another friend of the family did it? (...)

NORA. I asked her to her face, I said, if you can look me in the eye and swear by the Virgin that this is my grandchild I'll not see you short, just look me in the eye and tell me. (...) And all she said was, I'm not wanting your money, Mrs Ryan.

CASSIE. Do you know you never put a plate of food in front of me before he had his.

NORA. She was nothing but a wee hoor. (scene ii, p. 223)

Cassie's last remark strikes at the core of the argument. Her rebellion is not against her mother as such but rather against the patriarchal ideology which discriminates against the girls and denies them a voice of their own. Cassie's reaction against such ideology is an attempt to assert her identity through open confrontation with everyone around her. In order not to be silenced she transgresses from the woman's into the man's realm. This act of transgression is represented in the aggressive language mode which she uses, namely, she interrupts her mother and curses frequently. It is also represented in the physical act of claiming space on the dance floor, which is the man's space, as well as in the hidden act of promiscuity committed on her part so as to break from the bonds that tie her to a certain place and lifestyle. When her mother scorns her for not taking her marriage seriously, Cassie refuses to be compartmentalised into the role of a wife and a mother. Furthermore, she rejects the idea of romantic love, 'grabbing onto some man because he smells like excitement, he smells like escape'.⁴⁶ She feels that by breaking the rules she gains a control over the men, and the sense of fulfilment that she feels on account of that alternates with the guilt, which derives from her patriarchal upbringing. This is reflected in her ambiguous attitude towards the men

in her life. While her disgust with her husband makes her wish to leave, her love for her father perpetuates the feeling of guilt which makes her stay at home:

CASSIE. (...) My Daddy never lied to me. So it must've been me that lied to him. (scene i, p. 214)

Cassie is aware that her act of rebellion against the social rules cannot remain unpunished, but she persists in her determination to expose Marie's illusions. Yet she remains the prisoner of her own illusion. Her dream of escaping and of gaining financial and emotional independence has been built on mendacity. At some time she had dreamed of escape by clinging to a man other than her husband, but her former lover was her best friend's husband. Now she wishes to leave Belfast, but in doing so she must abandon her children. Furthermore, the money with which she intends to build her future has been stolen from her mother.

Cassie constantly nags Marie about her apparent short-sightedness and naiveté which makes her live in a fantasy world of her own. This is enhanced by the image of her as 'a wee girl with a smile that feeds the birds'⁴⁷ on her patio, a feminine woman as perceived by the community. Marie is portrayed as the perfect model of the feminine. She avoids open confrontation and seeks to resolve disputes by compromise. Unlike Cassie, who reacts aggressively, Marie's behaviour is based on ideas of faith and love which are fundamental to Christian ideology - and are represented by the pictures of the Madonna with the Child and Marie's late husband Michael which hang on the walls in her household. These ideas further perpetuate the model of the feminine, discussed in the earlier chapters of this study, which is based on the idea that marriage and

motherhood are the woman's main functions in society. As long as these two pictures maintain the central position in Marie's household they will serve to constantly remind her of her duties, as well as to silence her voice.

In the beginning of the play Marie resembles a younger version of Nora who is caught up in her memory of her late husband and imprisoned son. Limited to the domestic role, Marie has accepted her position ungrudgingly. Her need to express herself, her creativity and opinions, has been filtered into the rigorously impeccable performance of the household chores, and her determination to renovate her sitting room:

NORA. Oh I could say plenty I could. I've poems in my head as good as anyone. I could talk so it'd burn the wee hairs out your nose. I could. But will you tell me what the use is in talking?... I've a man to see about fifteen yards of plane peach polyester mix. That's what I'm doing. (scene ii, p. 234)

In the patriarchal community in which she has been brought up the men are seen as the breadwinners and the women are confined to performing household chores and taking care of the children. Therefore they will try to assert their identity within this confinement. In the eyes of the community, one's identity is determined by trivial matters such as whether or not one's flowers have been watered, one's windows cleaned and one's sitting room refurbished. If by chance one's less presentable knickers fall out of a laundry basket onto the street and end up on the top of a lamp-post, one will ignore them and act as if one has never seen them before in one's life. One's actions are judged in the eyes of the community, according to the patriarchal ideology which places women in a subservient position with regard to their male counterparts. Although absent from the stage, the men are given significance either in

image (Michael's photograph which dominates the setting until the end of scene iii) or in conversation (all the four female characters constantly mention the men in their lives). In such a way they still dominate women's lives. Munro gives two radically opposite views of men. The first is the nostalgic view perpetuated by Nora and Marie. For example, Marie's description of Michael to her sons is an idealised portrait of a hero:

MARIE. I just bring him into the fire and hold him and rock him and I say... (*Getting dreamy*) Your Daddy was a good man and a brave man and he did the best he could and he's in heaven watching out for you and when you're good he's happy, he's smiling at you and that's what keeps us all together, keeps me going, keeps me strong because I know your Daddy can see us... (scene i, p. 213)

Marie idealises her late husband's image in the eyes of her children and in this manner she places him in the centre of their experience, and her own. This is done in a sort of storytelling fashion, as a fairy-tale in which Michael has been turned into a hero, the subject of Marie's story. Cassie, on the contrary, offers quite a different, more humorous outlook on men:

CASSIE (*off*). I'll tell you what happens to all those men that drink whisky and all those wee boys that drink raspberry ice-cream syrup; their intestines get eaten away and their stomachs get eaten away and all the other bits inside just shrivel up and die. Then they've no insides left at all and all they can do is sit in front of the television all day and cough and shout for cups and cups and cups of tea because that's the only thing that can fill up their awful, empty, shrivelled insides... Yes, just like him... and him as well, so will you give me that cup? That's a good boy. (scene i, p. 190)

In her comic warning to Marie's little son Mickey, Cassie describes men in a negative light. Her story stands in direct opposition to Marie's story, in the sense that a man is

no longer the subject of a woman's story, but rather an object seen through a woman's eyes. The men in Cassie's story are being ridiculed, and their seemingly dominant position in the household is exposed as that of useless bullies. Faced with Marie's idealised picture of her late husband, Cassie feels the need to intrude into it and destroy it. Her confession about Michael's affairs with her and other women can therefore be seen as a means of objectivisation of Michael in Marie's eyes, and it will trigger Marie's emotional development from a naive young woman who draws her moral and emotional support from memories of her late husband, into a much stronger, if disillusioned and lonely figure. At the end of the play we see quite a different Marie, who has faced the deception in which she had lived since Michael's death and has exorcised her illusions by a single act of violence - the destruction of Michael's photograph, and the final confrontation with Deirdre:

MARIE. But I've no story, haven't they told you? I know nothing at all. That's the only story I'm fit to tell you, about nothing at all... Except being brave and coping great and never complaining and holding the home together... Is that the story you're wanting?

DEIRDRE says nothing.

Oh but they think I don't know how to be bitter, they think I never learned. I'm just a wee girl with a smile that feeds the birds.

So is this the truth you wanted to rob me of? Is this what you wanted to hear? Go you back now, go you back to your own Mother. She can tell you how bad he was, how he lied to her, that's a better story, that's a story that'll keep you safe from any man with a gentle smile and warm hands. Go you back to your own place!
(scene iv, pp. 253-4)

Marie's breaking away from dependency on a false picture of an absent husband, also represents her split with a history in which men are given the central role of subject. The lack of the subject will destabilise her position as the storyteller, for once the man-subject is removed from her story, she has no subject left to tell the story about. In this

sense, if she is to retain her position as a storyteller, she needs to find another subject for her story. After the truth about Michael's treachery has made her unable to maintain the centrality of his character in her story, Marie can only turn to her own experience, devoid of the male perspective. In other words, she can only make herself into the subject of herstory.

Another idea which derives from Marie's words is that woman's truth is not just different from man's truth, it is also different from another woman's truth - it is fragmented, rather than universal. Marie's story about Michael is different from Cassie's story, and from the story that has been told to Deirdre by her mother. In this way, the fragmentation of the world, which has been begun by Marie's realisation of the falsity of the domestic environment which she has created for her children and herself, has been joined by the fragmentation of one universal truth into a myriad individual truths, all different from each other.

Truth is the key word in this play. All of the protagonists have been the victims of some kind of deception. Nora's existence revolves around her children's; Cassie is disillusioned after her false hopes of escape by means of an extramarital affair and by means of leaving the town have failed; Deirdre has been deceived by her mother about the identity of her father and by false hope that she will regain her own identity through claiming her father's name; Marie has been deceived and betrayed by both her husband and her best friend. The truth has been manipulated by the men in their lives, for example, Michael never told Marie either about his affairs or about Deirdre's existence.

Munro introduces the image of a knife as a representation of a woman's truth and in this sense she introduces a link between language and violence, which is underlined in the play. Language is indeed used as a weapon in the power struggle between the main protagonists:

DEIRDRE. I need a knife. A wee blade of my own. It's quieter than a gun. You can hold it quiet in your hand. Maybe I'd like that. I see a lot of things. This time I saw a man holding another man outside the circle of light the street lamp made on the road. He kept him pinned on the wall in the dark with a wee blade. It was the neatest thing you ever saw, wee and thin, like he had a metal finger he could point where he liked and he was saying, 'Is that the truth then? Is that the truth?' but the other man never says anything back at all and I thought to myself that maybe it wasn't a question, maybe it was the knife he was talking about. It was the truth. I thought I'd like that. A wee bit of hard truth you could hold in your hand and point where you liked. (scene i, p. 208)

Later in the play Deirdre rips with the knife Nora's peach polyester material, and uses the same knife to threaten Marie in an attempt to make her tell the truth about Michael. In both cases, it is implied that whatever truths are there, they are violent. They upset people's lives, and cut through illusions as if they were a piece of cloth. In this way the knife's point - linguistically or literally speaking - becomes a vehicle for probing the truth(s).

In *Bold Girls*, Munro presents the violence from two associated perspectives. Firstly, it is political violence against an entire community, and secondly, it is the more internalised violence of men against women. So, when the British soldiers trample all over Nora's patio or run over her new bamboo suite, this does not represent only the

blind violence against her as a member of the Irish Catholic community, it is also the violation of her as an individual and as a woman, and the negation of her distinctive voice. The reaction against this violence has a significant place in Munro's writing. In her opinion it is not just a 'horrifying toll of suffering that happens to someone else, [it is] part of who we all are'.⁴⁸

The men's violence against the women is shown, on the one hand, as open physical violence as in the cases of Nora's husband who beats her, the anonymous gang who assault Deirdre outside the club, and the British soldiers who barge into Nora's house in pursuit of a suspect or raid the club. On the other hand, it is shown as a less obvious emotional violence, as in Joe's intentional neglect of Cassie's feelings or Michael's adultery. Most importantly, in both cases the physical violence is not seen on the stage, but is presented to readers/audiences through the women's stories of their own either direct or experiences. In one instance in scene I, Nora and Marie discuss a film they saw on video the night before. The film in question is *The Accused* (1988), by Jonathan Kaplan, a story of a young waitress Sarah Tobias (Jodie Foster) who was gang raped in a bar, and the struggle of Deputy DA Kathryn Murphy (Kelly McGillis) to convict the men who were responsible for the rape.

NORA. She was no good, that girl, if you ask me.

MARIE. Who?

NORA. Jodie Foster or whatever you call her. I'm not saying she deserved it, mind, but she should've known better, she should've known what'd be coming to her.

MARIE. But was that not the thing of it Nora, that no woman deserves...

NORA. (interrupts). Och, she
should've learnt better at her age. (...)
(scene i, pp. 191-2)

The emphasis in this excerpt is on the ongoing discussion in the play about the ways in which the rules of convention shape the female identity, transgressions of those rules on the part of female protagonists, and the consequences of those transgressions. Moreover, the attitude of their immediate environment is evident through Nora's comments, women's transgression from a norm is always seen as a sin, and women transgressors are always seen as persons of loose morals who deserve to be punished. Men's transgressions, on the contrary, are inscribed into the norm, they have become the norm, and as such, women's behaviour and system of values have been moulded according to the men's attitudes and beliefs.

As has been mentioned earlier, the stories told by the female protagonists portray both the men's physical and emotional abuse of those female protagonists, and the ways in which patriarchal ideology has turned their relationships with other women into an ongoing competition for acknowledgement by men. Hence, in scene ii, Cassie is reprimanded by Nora for using an f... words because women are not supposed to curse. In scene iii, the conflict between Marie and Cassie on the one hand, and Marie and Deirdre on the other, is again about the men, and about how the women fit into the men's world. In this sense, the verbalisation of the physical violence is still determined by the men's perspective. By the act of grabbing the knife and ripping apart Michael's portrait, Marie has seized '[the] wee bit of hard truth you could hold in your hand and point where you liked', ⁴⁹ that Deirdre speaks about in scene iii. The act of grabbing the knife, which represents the truth, can be interpreted as Marie's

mastering of the man's truth/hisstory, and subverting it, as has already been discussed, to reveal the woman's truth(s)/herstories which have been hidden beneath it.

6.5. *The Maiden Stone (1995)*

The pregnant travelling actress, Harriet, arrives with her husband Archie and children in the tiny village of Auchnibeck only to find out that her husband has been deceiving her about a potential theatrical commission at the local laird's mansion. She meets Mary, a local daftie, who throws a tantrum when she realises that Harriet has no intention of playing before the local villagers, and steals Harriet's costume. Still in shock, Harriet is introduced to Bidie and her brood. Bidie is a wet nurse who agrees to tend to Harriet's baby twins free of charge. Attracted by the prospect of getting hands on Mary's jewels, Harriet takes Mary for an understudy, much to Bidie's disagreement. At the same time Archie meets a strange traveller, Nick, and in a wager he wins the carpet Nick has stolen from the local laird. The troupe's luck turns for the worst, Mary's theft of the chickens is noticed and they are pressed to leave the area. Harriet's daughter Miriam, unwilling to work as a travelling player, intentionally crushes her foot with a stone. Archie meets Nick one more time, and in another wager he loses his coat and dies of cold. Bidie is disturbed by Nick's presence, there is an indication that there is a bond between them (could Nick be the father of her children?). Mary leaves the company and becomes pregnant by Nick. The second part of the play finds Harriet, Bidie, Miriam and other children in a depraved state, Mary returns heavily pregnant. She gives birth to the child whom Harriet exposes to cold weather until it dies. She then writes a letter of recommendation, addressed to another troupe of players for Mary to take to Edinburgh, while she remains in the rural community with Bidie and her daughter Miriam who has become a school teacher. At the end of the play, unable to accept her present state, Harriet turns into the stone of the title, while Bidie meets Nick one last time, in an act of reconciliation, and acceptance that people do need each other to survive.

In her acclaimed 1995 play *The Maiden Stone*, the idea that women have been placed in a powerless position in the social hierarchy is further explored. Munro sets the play's action in the past, as she portrays a small group of women of different ages and social backgrounds who have been brought together by a set of unfortunate

circumstances. The themes of a woman's position in society, a woman's sexuality, marriage and motherhood, are all explored here, as well as the issues of violence, and artistic creativity as an expression of selfhood. It is interesting to note how, in an interview in *The List* about his 1997 production of *The Maiden Stone* at the Edinburgh Royal Lyceum, Kenny Ireland characterised the play as Munro's illustration of the 'problems of being a working mother, while also being driven by your own creativity. The woman in this play is constantly being told she shouldn't pursue her career, and women come up against these barriers of defining themselves by their creativity even now'.⁵⁰

The Maiden Stone is a story about four women who belong to different generations and socio-cultural backgrounds. Harriet is north English, in her early forties, and comes from an upper class family; she is 'one of the Barnetts of Huddersfield'⁵¹ - as she proudly tells Bidie - who has fallen from grace in the eyes of her family after eloping with a player in her early teens and becoming an actress.

Munro portrays Bidie as an archetypal mother-figure, Mother Earth, a wise woman from folk tales, surrounded by her brood whom Munro gives the role of a chorus. Her origin is uncertain; she speaks in a broad north-eastern Doric which is impossible to place. One of the reasons for that is the fact that this particular accent is not entirely genuine. Munro has taken liberties with the language in the play because '[one] can change the tale if it makes for a better story, everything larger than detail is as real as [an author] can make it'.⁵² Bidie is a tinker and, like Harriet, an outsider in

Auchnibeck's community - an issue that she addresses herself when she first meets

Harriet:

BIDIE. (...) You're nae from roon here are ye?

HARRIET does not turn.

Naw. Nae mair am I. But I ken a' the roads. Far are you fae?

HARRIET. I am one of the Barnets of Huddersfield.

BIDIE. Then we're baith strangers here.

One of her children has returned with bread and a pitcher of milk.

She drinks from the pitcher then offers it to HARRIET.

Cold and sweet.

HARRIET shakes her head.

BIDIE. Come on lassie, I can hear the drouth in your throat, you're eating hot dust.

HARRIET. Thank you. No.

BIDIE shrugs, takes another giant swig.

HARRIET. I cannot eat when I travel. All the women in my family have been afflicted this way. Our blood is strong but our stomachs are delicate. (act I, scene ii, p. 10)

The way in which Harriet uses both verbal and body language immediately alienates her from the environment. Throughout the most of the play she uses standard English, and her initial demeanour towards Bidie and Mary can be seen as patronising. Her refusal of the offer of nourishment is due to her intention of delineating between herself and Bidie and letting the latter know that she, Harriet, is of a higher status and should be addressed accordingly. Bidie soon accepts this game and for the rest of the play she addresses Harriet as 'mistress'. She is being ironic here, as well as determined to undermine Harriet's illusions and expose her deteriorating social status.

Mary is a teenage orphan whose illicit birth and a slight mental disability places her on the margins of the small village community. Munro shows her as a wild child, whose artlessness and total unawareness of social codes are often represented on the stage as

the result of educational and to some extent emotional retardation. She is a tale-teller and a thief, whose verbal and physical violence seems to frighten people around her. From the beginning, she and Harriet are involved in a power-struggle by which they strive to place themselves at the top of the pecking order. This struggle begins as a verbal conflict about whether or not the actors are going to perform in Auchnibeck, and it escalates into an act of physical violence when Mary whisks away Harriet's wedding dress. A similar act of violence is committed later in the play when Harriet reestablishes her domination in their relationship by striking Mary:

HARRIET grabs MARY and hits her as hard as she can. She hits her again and wrestles to get the bracelet off her wrist.

MARY. No!

BIDIE. We'll have nane o' that!

HARRIET holds the bracelet up, examining it.

MARY. Gies it!

HARRIET bites it.

HARRIET. (*Surprised*) It's good metal.

BIDIE. Oh are you nae jist like me efter a'. That's a tinker's trick is it nae?

HARRIET. Payment for the gown.

MARY. Awa! You gied it me! You gied it me!

HARRIET just grins. MARY launches herself at her, wrestling for the bracelet. HARRIET grabs a stick and whacks her as hard as she can, hurting her.

BIDIE. (*Trying to get up*) Leave her!

The baby BIDIE is holding starts to cry. MARY is on the floor, clutching herself.

Aye... easy seen fit wey you've been living.

HARRIET just looks at her, patting her hair into place. She examines the bracelet.

It was her mither's. (act I, scene vi, p. 33)

By this act of violence she exposes the falsity of her high position in society and respectable status in the theatre; she is just another tinker, like Bidie and Mary. It also indicates that her and Mary's relationship has elements of a mother-daughter

relationship. Mary indeed takes over the role of a daughter, and stands by Harriet even when her own daughter, Miriam, abandons her. Similarly, when Harriet finally gives up travelling, affected by a difficult labour, her husband's death and the hardships of everyday life, it is Mary who continues the tradition and goes to Aberdeen to perform on the stage.

The fourth member of this unlikely group is Harriet's fourteen year old daughter Miriam who tries to get to terms with her family's situation and rejects her mother's illusions. Her final act of wrenching herself free from her mother's domination is an act of self-mutilation, when, unwilling to dance in front of an audience and in a desperate attempt to prove that her family is not a group of tinkers or beggars, she throws a rock on one foot.

All of the female protagonists are defined by their marginalised position in society - Harriet's rebellion from the social codes places her beneath and outside her social class, and her vanity places her and her company beyond the hope of joining forces with another actors' company and thus improving their financial position. She insists to Bidie that they are artists and not tinkers, while at the same time she instructs Miriam in the tricks of the beggars' trade:

HARRIET. If your tears are silent, not vulgar sobs, they cannot fail to arouse pity and bear witness to your gentle blood. Now... Your mother is sitting by the roadside. She has been driven off by the ingratitude of grasping relatives. She cannot beg for food. She is too proud, so her children starve. You do not tell them the full history, you hint, we have powerful enemies, you tease them with possibilities... (*Affected.*) What has Mama had to lower herself to, she who played harpsichord and sang only nursery songs for her own beloved chicks... then you may sob.

MIRIAM. Aw Mother, I'll be sick.

HARRIET (to BIDIE). She is sick before every performance. Well you can cry at least Miriam... Miriam! (HARRIET shakes her, MIRIAM starts to sob. Silently.) Better. Be off with you. (act I, scene iii, p. 14)

It is without doubt that Harriet genuinely believes in the delusions that she has created about her life. All of the characters live in delusions, like the protagonists of the previous two plays. Miriam believes that she will free herself from her mother's domination if she destroys her 'one talent', ⁵³ 'natural grace'. ⁵⁴ Mary believes that she will become respectable and loved by becoming an actress. Bidie believes that she will defeat the devil by looking him in the eye. Harriet dreams of resurrecting her acting career, because she believes that only on the stage does she truly exist. Even after a set of circumstances results in Archie's death and the family's total impoverishment, she still clings to her old theatre costumes in a similar way to Nora in *Bold Girls* clinging to her peach polyester material. For Harriet, her costumes represent the old image of herself - respectable, loved, and above all young and beautiful. Her strong will and the need to distinguish herself from the others makes it quite impossible for her ever to fit into the community.

Bidie mercilessly attacks Harriet's delusions. For example, Harriet tries to sweet-talk Mary into joining them because Mary has led her to believe that she has jewels which she would be happy to dispose of if Harriet taught her how to act and dance. She tells stories of success and romance, tall tales that most likely never happened but whose distorted memories have kept her warm and alive in her distress. Bidie, on the contrary, tries to present Mary with a less attractive image of a travelling actress, as a 'tinker', ⁵⁵ and a 'hoor': ⁵⁶

HARRIET moves to one of her trunks and throws it open. She pulls out a dress and holds it against herself, showing it off to MARY.

HARRIET. Roxanne...

MARY edges forward, fascinated.

BIDIE. (Warning) Mary...

HARRIET lets MARY finger the dress. She picks up another.

HARRIET. Lady Macbeth.

BIDIE pulls a cloth against her for an apron.

BIDIE. A farmer's wife. Weel respected.

HARRIET. (Another gown) This is for the farce, of course we don't have a large enough company to play it now.

BIDIE. (Pulls the cloth over her head) A feed lassie. Still weel respected, Mary.

HARRIET. (Another dress) Andromeda, it can also be Titania with the cloak, see?

BIDIE. (Clasping her hands together) The minister's wife. He's nae the breath, the strength or the inclination tae wed onybody but if she did she'd be weel respected.

HARRIET. (Stroking the last dress reverentially) Juliet. I can still play the part.

BIDIE. An fit ither women will you find in these parts, Mary? Fit kind o' women walk the roads? A tinker. An actress. A hoor. Nae respectability at a' unless they've siller tae buy it. Fars your siller, mistress? (act I, scene vi, pp. 36-7)

It is evident from the above extract that there is a verbal competition between Bidie and Harriet, although they do not directly address each other. Although Harriet manages to leave Mary spellbound about the possibility of becoming a player, her attitude towards her own child, when faced with the prospect of earning money from the soldiers, brims with solicitation. She ignores Bidie's warning that one of the soldiers has already tried to rape Bidie's thirteen year old daughter, and makes Miriam dress in a sexually explicit gown:

HARRIET is hustling MIRIAM into a white organdie dress. MIRIAM pulls it up at the front. HARRIET pulls it down again, studying the effect.

(...)

HARRIET. Then they'll know beauty when they see it. Men that might have seen death. Mistress Begg, we have entertained regiments many times. We know what we are about. Now dance, Miriam.

MIRIAM shakes her head nearly crying. HARRIET pulls the dress off her shoulders, shakes out the skirts. She is gentle but inflexible.
(act I, scene vi, p. 42)

It is desperation that makes Harriet close her eyes to the facts and pretend that their touring the wastes of north-east Scotland is more than beggary. It is also the only way that she can assert her selfhood, something that belongs only to her and is not dependent on her husband or children.

Mary finds it fascinating that Harriet has turned herself into the subject of her stories. She, who has been marginalised by the small community in which she lives, finds it liberating to be able to leave the place where her voice has been silenced and find a place where she would be heard. The taming process that Mary undergoes during the play will result in her final rejection of her natural surroundings, as well as rejection of motherhood, as she sets on an uncertain journey to the theatrical world of Edinburgh. Unlike her, and very much like Sara in *Bondagers*, Bidie remains close to the land, and becomes a representation of the land and its lifegiving force. Miriam, due to the act of self-mutilation, confines herself to a respectable (sexless) and barren (childless) existence. These women's distinct experiences feed into each other continually throughout the play, and create a strong sense of solidarity in moments of crisis.

Although *The Maiden Stone* is primarily a play about women, unlike in her previous two plays, Munro here includes three male characters: Harriet's son Harry and husband Archie, and the traveller Nick. While Harry remains silent throughout the

play, the two other male characters actively participate in the events, complementing each other. Their self-proclaimed strength is illusive and marked by their physical and emotional fragility. Archie's poor health is often hinted at by Harriet in relation to both his acting and everyday life. Nick's character is a representation of the 'devil', and he will have significant impact on Bidie's and Mary's lives, and Archie's life alike. He makes wagers with Archie, in the manner of a folk tale devil, which will bring about Archie's downfall. It would be easy to interpret Nick's character as the demonisation of maleness, particularly if Bidie's speech from act i, scene vii is taken into account:

BIDIE. I had a boy once. A man. Aw but he was braw. He was the ither half o' me. Fan he stroked my face I'd greit. It felt like we'd baith cam hame. The deil kilt him.
The deil cam fan he lay atween my legs and crawled intae his hairt and kilt my bonny loon deider than ice. Then he wis the deil. Then I'd tae live wi' him. He sat by my hearth an hated me till it wrinkled the skin on me. He hated me dry. I had tae get awa fae him. He's aye been chasing me... I've aye been feart I micht hae loved him efter a'. Fit could be worse? I've aye been feart. (act I, scene vi, p. 46)

However, this would be a serious misreading of Munro's intentions. What Munro sets out to explore are the different ways in which men and women perceive sexuality, as well as the ways in which men perceive and restrain women's sexuality. In order to show this she uses references from folk tales. For example, at the beginning of the play Bidie tells her brood the tale of Johnnie and the giant's daughter. It is interesting to see how Munro alters the standard ending of the folk tale, which has a male perspective, and provides an alternative ending from a female perspective.

BIDIE. (...) They say they got merriet... (*BIDIE laughs again, raises the baby and kisses it.*) I say she held his bairn up tae him. She let him see his eyes in its face. Then she took it awa wi'

her intae the forest, Johnnie's eyes an a'. Is that nae foo it should finish? (act I, scene i, p. 2)

The patriarchal cultural imperatives which glorify matrimony and motherhood are subverted so as to show that neither are inherent in a woman's nature. In this sense, the altered ending of the folk tale reveals the herstory which has been suppressed by the male-dominated perspective. However, although this ending shows a possible reinterpretation of the folk tradition on the part of the woman author, it would be wrong to presume that Munro presents the male characters in *The Maiden Stone* as the oppressors. Instead, she is trying to convey that there is a fundamental biological difference between the two genders and that this difference must be acknowledged if any concord is to be achieved. In her opinion people are

so afraid, so vulnerable [that they] spend half of [their] time to possess and control each other and each feels the other is achieving that better and has more real power. [They] think [that their] sexual partners, those [they] know with [their] touch, the first way [they] know anything, hold something just as fundamental that [they] lack, choice, power, assertiveness, the right to emotion, to pain, to creation. And [they're] terrified at the aching absence in [themselves] that [they] can only patch over with parts of someone else's body.⁵⁷

Munro's suggestion is that men exercise their control over women's minds by controlling their bodies. Archie has remained with Harriet all those years because he believes that he can still arouse her passion and control it. For example, in act I, scene vi, Munro presents what could be described as 'an orgasm scene' between Harriet and Archie:

HARRIET grabs onto him. They hold each other for a moment then she kisses him.

[ARCHIE]. See? Quiet as anything. You'd have to travel a long way to find another man like me, wouldn't you though?

HARRIET tries to touch him but he stops her.

Naw. That was fine lassie. I'm no wanting more.

ARCHIE sighs happily, leaning back. HARRIET sits beside him, still tense. (act I, scene vi, pp. 26-7)

Harriet's expression of her self, her identity, through sexuality and creativity has been restrained respectively by her husband's inadequacy and inability to find a commission, and by the burden of childbearing. All of this leads her to feel a sense of frustration and gives rise to ultimate rejection of her sexuality and her career. She chooses a barren life instead, as symbolised in her merger with the Maiden Stone.

On the surface the male protagonists are seen as the embodiment of an obscure and elusive green-eyed maleness which becomes a symbolic tool by which female sexuality is represented. The world of the play is clearly a woman's space where men have become the intruders and the objects of desire in the female gaze. In act I, scene v, Nick recounts to Mary his encounter with the laird's wife:

NICK. Well... If you're doon on your knees in your ain drawing room, rosewood chairs and big china pots, and you're sweeping your new carpet, soft as grass and bright as flooers... and you look up... and there's a man standing in your garden, watching you... And if you get up... if you open the door... if you pull him in tae you and wrap your arms roond his neck... If you can dee that and never e'en ask a man's name afore you've tasted his mou you must've been thinking aboot naething else for an awfy long time. (...)
(act I, scene v, p. 25)

Nick's words refer to the idea that women are unable to separate love from sex. In this manner their sexuality is placed above the neck:

NICK. She said she loved me. That's a'she said. 'I love you',
(Snorts.) Think she meant it?
 MARY. Aye. Aye I should think she would.
 NICK. Fit wey could she? I jist shagged her on the drawing
 room carpet.
 MARY. Fit did you say?
 NICK. I says 'Well then mistress I could use something for my
 trouble.' She starts greitin and runs oot the room. She'll've been
 reading too mony novels eh? (act I, scene v, p. 25)

The woman's love is compared with romantic love - a proposition that is corroborated by the regular mentioning in the play of a man with green eyes. The green-eyed man is a stereotype of a heroic stranger in romantic novels. However, the green eyes also refer to greed and hunger - they are symbolic of an excessive sexual appetite. A green-eyed man is therefore seen as one who sucks on a woman's lifegiving power and threatens to restrain and drain her sexuality. Through the characters of Harriet and Bidie, Munro explores women's need to reflect upon and define their sexuality as part of their identity rather than it being imposed upon them for reproductive purposes. Harriet's description of elopement with her first husband - with its stereotypical elements such as fleeing into the night on the back of a horse, galloping past the fields and streams, etc. - reminds of one romantic novels. This description could be taken to support Nick's notion that the women are incapable of separating love and sex if it were not starkly opposed by Bidie's cynical humour which puts Harriet's recollection of her teenage affair in quite a different perspective:

HARRIET. (...) We eloped at midnight. I took nothing but my mother's jewels and some of my dresses. I wore them all. Five dresses one on top of the other. When he put his arms round me he thought he held a feather mattress. We laughed. It was the first time any man had touched me, the first kiss I'd ever known except my father's.

Maiden Stone Munro questions whether or not there is a choice at all. This is reflected in Bidie's final comment on the story about the Maiden Stone which represents the quintessential attitude about women's choices: 'Mebbe though... mebbe she looked ahint her and thocht... 'Will I bend? Will I brak? Or will I be a stane?'.⁵⁹ If a woman chooses sexuality she inevitably has to pay the price of motherhood, which will in turn either transform her into a non-sexual object or eventually kill her. If, on the other hand, she rejects the lifegiving power, she must at the same time renounce her own sexuality.

Female sexuality is further reflected in the concept of Nature. Woman represents nature; she is referred to as part of the landscape and the land into which man sows life. Munro says that it is the landscape and the language that 'shaped [her] imagination and *The Maiden Stone*, for [her], is a celebration of all of them'.⁶⁰ The play's storyline is indeed rooted in the oral tradition of folk tales (the play begins with Bidie's recount of 'The Tale of Johnnie and the Giant's Tochter'), ballads (Bidle frequently interrupts the action with a popular folk tune), and local legends (act II begins with Bidie telling 'The Legend of the Lady of Corgarff and Her Children'). Fantasy and fable often permeate the structure of the play. Munro also makes use of a chorus-like element in the example of Bidie's brood (the most recent production at Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum included the traditional Greek chorus of twelve). Folkloric elements are often used by a number of Scottish playwrights such as Lochhead, Glover, and Munro herself, to 'deconstruct both historically determined views of women and the eternal feminine'.⁶¹ In *The Maiden Stone* their function is to reestablish a link with the 'magical and spiritual properties'⁶² of the land which is

echoed through the character of Bidie - an archetypal image of Mother Earth that is reinforced by the scenes in which her children wear animal masks. It is also reminiscent of the image of a wise woman which has been corrupted through time to signify a red-haired witch of the folk tales. Bidie is described as sitting 'on the throne of children and beasts'.⁶³ In her introduction to *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes describes the wild woman who comes to us through the sounds of nature - the river, the rain, the wind - which echo the land that we walk upon. Similar to this image of woman as Mother Nature, she is furthermore compared to a predator. There are a number of allusions in the play to the howling of wolves. For example, in her despair Mary howls like a wolf when her hopes of going to Inverness are aborted, while Archie refers to Harriet's sexual appetite as that of

a tiger... a bear... the last wild wolf in the western world... and I'm the showman that carries you round and shows you off to the world... You could tear out my guts and make a grill out of them but I never even need to put a chain on you... I'm no afraid of you am I? No afraid at all... Half the world is feart to look you in the eye and the other half wants to shoot you as an affront to public decency and private peace of mind... but I'm no feart... (...) (act I, scene vi, p. 26)

The comparison is especially interesting in Harriet's case because one can argue that her choice has originated in her pursuit of her dream of romantic love. She has abandoned her social station to follow her heart. She has born children as a gift to her husband, because she could not imagine 'a present that would cost [her] more',⁶⁴ and because she was drawn to the idea of creating somebody who would perpetuate what she and her husband had created together. Having realised that she cannot fulfil her creative impulses through motherhood, she 'stopped seeing any sense in it all. There is

no choice in it'.⁶⁵ The children are therefore objectivised and the motherhood is confronted by acting as a more potent means of self-definition:

HARRIET. I bore two children at the back of a stage with only the company to help me when they were not required in their parts. Each time, Mary, each time I rose from my child bed, put that new thing in a basket and walked out on stage to say my lines, to dazzle them and the pain was nothing, the fear and the blood were nothing because they saw me and I was transformed. (act II, scene iii, p. 54)

Mary yearns for such a transformation without any real understanding of its full implications. It is not only the old way of life and her child that she must renounce, alteration is required on the cultural and linguistic level as well. Harriet agrees to instruct Mary in social manners, and above all she tries to change the way she speaks, turning in this way the wild woman into a tame, socialised one. Assuming a new language means assuming a new identity, and in forcing a new voice on herself Mary is trying to turn into something that is alien to her nature. Munro uses different language modes - the standard English and the rich north-eastern Doric - in order to differentiate between the two worlds - the urban/cultured world which is represented by the players and the rural/natural environment of Auchnibeck, represented by Mary, and to some extent by Bidie. At first, the linguistic distinction follows the social one; in the beginning of the play Harriet presents herself as socially and intellectually superior to Bidie and Mary who are representatives of the rural community. Furthermore, Harriet's theatrical and social background is based on the written literary tradition. As already mentioned in the 'Introduction' to this study, this tradition considered itself superior to the oral, storytelling tradition, which has much more rural, earthy connotations, and which is represented by Bidie. In this sense, a competition between

Harriet and Bidie for Mary's intention may be seen as the contest between the written and oral literary traditions for the upper hand in the communicational hierarchy. Also, the use of Doric, as the medium based on the rich tradition of oral literature, enables inclusion in the play's framework of elements of fantasy (Bidie continually tells stories of myths and supernatural) and fable (Bidie's brood are repeatedly represented like animals), thus elevating the play's themes onto an epic level.

Notes.

Chapter Six - Storytelling and Herstories: Analysis of Female Identity in Three Plays by Rona Munro

- ¹ Telephone interview with Rona Munro, 12 February 1997, p. 1.
- ² Telephone interview with Rona Munro, 12 February 1997, pp. 1-2.
- ³ Idem.
- ⁴ Rona Munro, 'Sex and Food', a manuscript (courtesy of the author), pp. 1-2.
- ⁵ Idem.
- ⁶ Rona Munro, *Fugue in Your Turn to Clean the Stair and Fugue* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995), p. 74.
- ⁷ Idem.
- ⁸ Rona Munro, *Fugue*, p. 78.
- ⁹ Idem.
- ¹⁰ Idem.
- ¹¹ Rona Munro, 'Sex and Food', p. 2.
- ¹² Idem.
- ¹³ Idem.
- ¹⁴ Rona Munro, *Fugue*, p. 80.
- ¹⁵ Idem.
- ¹⁶ Idem.
- ¹⁷ Rona Munro, 'Sex and Food', a manuscript, p. 1.
- ¹⁸ Idem.
- ¹⁹ Rona Munro, *Fugue*, p. 90.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 81.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 76.
- ²² Ibid., p. 80.
- ²³ Idem.
- ²⁴ Idem.
- ²⁵ Idem.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 94.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 119.
- ²⁸ Idem.
- ²⁹ Idem.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 75.
- ³¹ Idem.
- ³² Idem.
- ³³ Interview with Rona Munro, pp. 4-5.
- ³⁴ Interview with Rona Munro, p. 4.
- ³⁵ Idem.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 5.
- ³⁷ Rona Munro, *Bold Girls in First Run 3* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1991), p. 187.
- ³⁸ Idem.
- ³⁹ Idem.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 192.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 216.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 219.
- ⁴³ Idem.
- ⁴⁴ Idem.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 225.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 247.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 254.
- ⁴⁸ Rona Munro, 'Sex and Food', a manuscript, p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ Rona Munro, *Bold Girls*, p. 208.
- ⁵⁰ Neil Cooper, 'DRAMA - The Maiden Stone', Theatre Preview in *The List*, 2-15 May 1997, p. 64.

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- ⁵¹ Rona Munro, *The Maiden Stone* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995), p. 10.
⁵² Author's Note to *The Maiden Stone*, p. v.
⁵³ Rona Munro, *The Maiden Stone*, p. 21.
⁵⁴ Idem.
⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 37.
⁵⁶ Idem.
⁵⁷ Rona Munro, 'Sex and Food', p. 3.
⁵⁸ Peter Zenzinger, 'The New Wave' in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (eds.) Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (Edinburgh: EUP, 1996), p. 129.
⁵⁹ Rona Munro, *The Maiden Stone*, p. 35.
⁶⁰ 'Historical Background' in Programme Note to *The Maiden Stone* (Royal Lyceum Theatre Company, 2-17 May 1997), p. 19.
⁶¹ Audrey Bain, 'Loose Canons: Identifying a Women's Tradition in Playwriting' in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies*, p. 141.
⁶² 'Historical Background' in Programme Note to *The Maiden Stone*, p. 18.
⁶³ Rona Munro, *The Maiden Stone*, p. 1.
⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 54.
⁶⁵ Idem.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In the course of the study *Cats on a Cold Tin Roof: Gender and Language in Plays by Five Contemporary Scottish Women Playwrights* fifteen plays by five very different women authors were examined in the context of modern feminist literary analysis. The main objective of the study was to show, on a sample of plays, how Sue Glover, Liz Lochhead, Marcella Evaristi, Sharman Macdonald, and Rona Munro used recurring themes, imagery and discursive modes in exploring female identity. After careful examination of first and second waves feminist theories, the author decided to move beyond the work of such feminist theorists as Dale Spender and Sheila Rowbotham who claimed that the existing forms of language were man-made and unsuitable for expression of varied ideas and issues by women writers and women speakers alike. Instead, the author concentrated on different ways in which these five playwrights have endeavoured to re-examine gender roles within patriarchal framework, as well as indicate possible ways of decentralising and destabilising that framework. On the whole, the results of the study have shown that certain recurrent themes, imagery and discursive modes can be found in all of the plays. Even though the authors may have used them to describe a variety of issues, these themes, images and discursive modes have proved to be a useful frame of reference for the author's examination of the plays in the light of feminist, psychoanalyst and sociolinguist analysis.

The recurring themes that the study focused on are women's position in patriarchal society, women's (non-)awareness of their identity, female sexuality, intragender and intergender relationships, and possibilities of expressing oneself by biological/artistic creation. Analysis of these themes sometimes touched upon other themes, such as economical and sexual exploitation of women in society (e.g. Glover's *Bondagers*), national identity (e.g. Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, Evaristi's *Commedia*), and absent males (e.g. Glover's *Bondagers*, Evaristi's *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses*, and Munro's *Fugue* and *Bold Girls*), and, whenever relevant, these themes were also briefly discussed. The author's decision to discuss female identity divorced from national identity, although both are mostly explored in conjunction by many Scottish playwrights and literary theorists, may come as a surprise. However, the author's initial hypothesis was that female identity, unlike national identity, is unfixed and changeable. The author has used the concept of female identity in a much broader sense than with regard to one's biological determinants. Indeed, the concept itself is much more complex; it is characterised by its biological and social constructedness, as well as by its philosophical essence. It consists of both subjectiveness of 'I' who speaks and objectiveness of 'I' who is spoken about, according to Lacanian theory. In this sense, although territorial and cultural attributes indubitably play a role in its shaping, the whole concept of female identity (and indeed male identity) is much too broad to be defined exclusively by those attributes. Even when the authors strive to give a clearcut definition of the characters' national belonging, it becomes a millstone in the characters' emotional development, and their relationships with other characters, such as in the case of male characters in Evaristi's *Commedia*, or Lochhead's and Glover's treatment of historical personae in *Mary*

Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off, *Blood and Ice* and *The Straw Chair* respectively. Of course, in certain cases, such as in the instance of Lochhead's historical play, the two concepts - female and national identity - were closely intertwined, and were discussed accordingly.

The plays under scrutiny in this study have been chosen in order to show a cross-section of different perspectives from which the aforementioned themes could be examined. Five out of fifteen plays deal with historical themes: Glover's *The Straw Chair* and *Bondagers*, Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, and Munro's *The Maiden Stone*. Other plays delineate women's life in modern society. All of them include all or most of the themes. If examined closely, they lead to inevitable conclusion that although times may have changed, women's position in a society has remained marginalised to a certain extent. Rona in *The Seal Wife*, may have a free choice to either stay in the confining familial environment which suffocates her or to leave, unlike Lady Rachel from *The Straw Chair*, who has no power to change her predicament. However, the end result is similar, both women are marginalised by the patriarchal framework in which they live, and in some cases severely punished for their transgressions. However, there has not been a case, in any play analysed in this study, where marginalisation by 'patriarchal framework' would be equalled to marginalisation by men. According to these authors, women are bound by their biological determinants. A life-giving force of childbirth is also represented as a repressive, life-threatening force in *Blood and Ice*, and *The Maiden Stone*. Motherhood is perceived as a repressive force, such as in *The Seal Wife*, *Commedia* and *The Maiden Stone*. The position of power may become

unobtainable, or unsustainable due to one's sex, such as in *Mouthpieces* or *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*. The women are also bound by social conventions and expectations. Rona, in *The Seal Wife*, is looked upon as strange because of her need for freedom. Rachel's need to be loved, and her independent spirit, has resulted with her ostracism from Edinburgh society in *The Straw Chair*. Mary Shelley, in *Blood and Ice*, suggests that the only independent women in her time are loose women. Marie's world, in *Bold Girls*, is shattered after having found out about her late husband's affair with her best friend. The conflict between one's personal expectations and social norms may result in creation of the state of neurosis, psychosis and split subject. However, all of this can also apply to male characters in the discussed plays. Aneas, in *The Straw Chair*, is as much a victim of patriarchy as Rachel. When Ellen's husband loses his farm, this will not just affect the lives of bondagers, but also the hands who hired them, and their families. These playwrights have managed to transgress the idea according to which rules, as well as means of communication, are man-made and unsuitable for women's use. Instead, they have placed their ideas in a broader perspective. According to them, both genders are, more or less, oppressed by a self-perpetuating patriarchal framework. Although the author fully supports this argument, she has, nevertheless, chosen to use the terms feminine vs. masculine properties, according to traditional feminist analyses, in order distinguish between the oppressed and the oppressing subjects respectively. In most cases, the oppressing social forces are left invisible. For instance, in *Fugue*, patriarchy is signified by animal imagery - a headless rabbit. Even in those cases when male characters are closely identified with the oppressing forces, they are not one-dimensional, and it is evident from their character development that they themselves

are on the receiving end of the socialisation process. Alex, in *The Seal Wife*, is a bully, however, his need to dominate derives from deep emotional insecurity caused by his father's abandonment. Aneas, in *The Straw Chair*, initially rejects Rachel, only to realise at the end of the play that he has himself been manipulated by external social forces. Knox, in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, is a mere representation of a puritan social force of the time. On occasions, the oppressive force is represented by female protagonists, such as in *Bold Girls*.

All of the protagonists, regardless of gender, are portrayed as outcasts, different and marginalised from social power structures. The protagonists' acknowledgment of their respective identities does not bring gratification, it does not change their position on the social and communicational hierarchy, but it leaves open the opportunity for such a change.

The study tried to show how the stories concentrated on the female protagonists, thus shifting the balance of power-relationships between the dramatic characters. Since these plays offer an analysis of existing power relationships, without resolving them, this schism is often expressed in the authors' choice of an open-ended structure. In Sue Glover's *The Seal Wife*, Rona disappears, but she leaves a daughter behind her, 'another prey', 'another island', as she herself says to her husband. In *The Straw Chair*, the readers/audience are aware of Rachel's predicament, and although Glover shows her silent and deranged at the end of the play, there is still a glimpse of hope that her story will be heard, voiced by Aneas and Isabel who have become the bearers of that hope. Although unable to promote the change, the authors continuously strive

to draw one's attention to the existing imbalance of the intergender power relationships, both in social situations and in communication. For instance, in Rona Munro's *The Bold Girls* and in Marcella Evaristi's *Commedia*, the positions of the female protagonists in the social hierarchy may not have changed, however, their emotional awareness of themselves as independent, sexual beings certainly has.

The authors go further to undermine the traditional models of the virgin/strumpet dichotomy, according to which women's sexuality is repressed and demonised in literature. Liz Lochhead, for example, shows how this repression and demonisation by patriarchal social authorities results in the creation, in the mind of 'a female fantasist', of a monster (thus, it is possible to interpret Frankenstein as both an emanation of female sexuality, and female creativity).

The model of the eternal feminine is shown in these plays as the source of objectification, commodification and appropriation of women. The authors identify three types of the feminine: the virgin, the strumpet and the old hag, which they use profusely in their plays, often for the purpose of their deconstruction. The particular focus is placed on the already mentioned virgin/strumpet dichotomy, which is established through the use of diverse imagery, only to be subverted and ultimately rejected. The authors also expose romantic concepts of love and family as repressive agents of the patriarchal society by which women are forced into certain gender roles.

One such role is the childbearing power of a woman, creative power from which man is excluded and which he has need to control. All five authors see female identity as

socially induced rather than biologically determined; and gender as the result of a complex socialisation process that children undergo at an early age, and which determines the respective male/female social roles.

From this follows that childbearing and motherhood are not seen as inherent to women, i.e. as a natural, biologically determined function, but rather as a socially induced function. For example, Fiona from Sharman Macdonald's *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* chooses not to get married and have children. Macdonald's approach to the choices women are given is positive, her female protagonists are given free will to choose their destinies. Glover, Lochhead and Munro, on the contrary, paint a different picture.

There is a price to pay if one wishes to fulfill one's desires. For example, the sexuality of the female protagonists in *The Maiden Stone* is both a creative and deadly force, as Munro clearly shows in the powerful image of throwing birth blood onto the snow in the birth scene in act II, scene iv.

BIDIE has a basin in her hands. She moves between them and throws its contents out over the snow. It was full of blood. It spreads between them, staining the snow at their feet with red. MARY and MIRIAM stare down. (act II, scene iv, p. 62)

Here again, like in Lochhead's *Blood and Ice*, a parallel is drawn between blood which is both a life-giving and a life-taking force, and ice, or in this case the whiteness of snow, which represents the suspension of life. In *Blood and Ice*, Lochhead goes further to draw a parallel between childbearing and writing, when she compares spilling

of birth blood with ink, hence the term 'writing with blood'. In *The Maiden Stone*, Harriet is an actress, an artist who uses words as a medium of conveying poetry to other people. She is also a mother, whose blood is shed in childbirth. In this way, the parallel between blood and artistic creation is reinforced once again.

In order to overturn the model of the eternal feminine and expose the falsity of a view that gender roles are fixed and unchangeable, both notions are presented in the plays as unfixed, unstable and flexible. The authors strive to reconcile the mind/body dichotomy which is at the core of patriarchal ideology, and which involves objectivisation and commodification of a woman through severing her head from her body (as symbolised in *Blood and Ice* by the red ribbon Claire wears round her neck).

Instead of viewing a feminine principle (the body) as irrational and emotional, as opposed to a masculine principle (the mind) which is rational and intellectual, these authors strive to show their female protagonists' growing consciousness of their intellectual, emotional, sexual and linguistic power. As opposed to being objects in male gaze (e.g. Westerman sisters in *Dracula*), the female protagonists are shifted to the centralised position of a gazer, turning simultaneously the male protagonists into the objects in female gaze (e.g., in act I, in Lochhead's *Blood and Ice*, Shelley walks into lady guests wearing nothing but a table cloth; in act II, in Macdonald's *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout* Fiona uses Ewan as a sex object to get back at her mother; and in *The Winter Guest*, also by Macdonald, Elspeth observes her teenage grandson through a telescope, while her daughter takes photos of two schoolboys at the beach in an act of objectification).

Another misconception about womanhood which is exposed in these plays is the notion of sisterhood. The authors show how far from being an amorphous mass on account of their common experience, women are very much divided in terms of their position in society, which makes them compete with each other.

Such a discord is shown, for example, in the relationships between Westerman sisters and their maid in Lochhead's *Dracula*, Mary Shelley and her half-sister Claire and their maid in *Blood and Ice*, and in Munro's *Bold Girls*, where Nora and Cassie's (mother and daughter) different perceptions of their situations and reality around them causes an argument on a girls' night out. This is in accordance with Deborah Tannen's proposition, already mentioned in the course of the study, according to which, although men and women are conditioned by patriarchal ideology to be competitive and co-operative respectively, their behaviour will differ in different social situations. However, a number of plays also deal with the supportive rapport amongst the female protagonists. This indicates that the issue of sisterhood should not simply be dismissed as the tool of patriarchal cultural imperatives to turn women into an amorphous mass. Rather, it is a complex issue which needs to be redressed from a distinctly female perspective.

Several other plays also examine mother-daughter relationships, directly (Sara and Tottie in Glover's *Bondagers*; Morag and Fiona in Macdonald's *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*; Maggie and Isla in Macdonald's *When We Were Women*; Elspeth and Frances in Macdonald's *The Winter Guest*) and indirectly (e.g. Sara and

Liza in *Bondagers*; the haunting ghosts of Mary Shelley's mother Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Stuart's mother in Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* respectively; Marie and Deirdre in Munro's *Bold Girls*, Harriet and Mary in *The Maiden Stone*). Similarly, mother-son relationships and father-daughter relationships are explored in depth in Marcella Evaristi's plays *Commedia* and *Mouthpieces*. However, the focus of Evaristi's plays remains with intra-gender and inter-gender relationships in general, and the possibilities of inter-gender communication.

Besides recurrent themes the study also focused on a limited number of images and metaphors in the plays under inspection. Following an extensive analysis it was possible to identify a set of recurring imagery and metaphors which were used for the purpose of identifying and re-defining the traditional concept of the feminine. They include the sea, islands, the land, animal, food, blood, mirrors and pictures imagery. Other imagery, such as the biblical imagery was also mentioned when relevant to analysis of specific plays.

A detailed examination of fifteen plays brought to the conclusion that these images and metaphors were used in order to represent different aspects of female identity. In most of the cases the different imagery is used to illustrate the same ideas, although occasionally some authors employ the same imagery to depict different ideas.

The imagery of islands is generally used to depict the concept of the feminine as the Other, to use Simone de Beauvoir's term, marginalised from social structures of

power. For example, there is frequent reference to islands in Glover's *The Seal Wife* and *The Straw Chair*, Rona names her daughter Isla in *The Seal Wife*, and Macdonald's main protagonist in *When We Were Women* is also called Isla.

Sea imagery is used to illustrate women's sexuality as an unbridled force in both Glover's *The Seal Wife* and *The Straw Chair* and in Lochhead's *Blood and Ice*. In Macdonald's plays, though, the sea represents a temporal aspect of an individual reality, rather than a specific female identity.

The land and food imagery in the plays by the five authors is also connected with different representations of the female body and female sexuality. In Munro's *The Maiden Stone* and in Glover's *Bondagers*, for example, the land imagery is associated with female lifegiving power. Both authors show how this power is controlled by patriarchal authorities, and in this way they equate economic exploitation of land with economic and sexual exploitation of women. Similarly, the food imagery is used to show commodification and objectification of women on the part of men, such as for example in Lochhead's *Dracula*.

Animal and blood images are, furthermore, used in Glover's *The Seal Wife* and *The Straw Chair*, Lochhead's *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula*, and Munro's *Fugue* and *The Maiden Stone* to illustrate women's sexuality and women's creativity (both biological and artistic) respectively. The perspectives slightly differ, while in *The Seal Wife* the seals represents the otherness of female nature, and female sexuality repressed by patriarchal authorities, in *Fugue* the effects of male sexuality on the female psyche are

represented in the image of rabbits that Kay observes in the woods. A woman is frequently compared to 'a wolf' (*Fugue*, *The Maiden Stone*), 'a tiger' (*The Maiden Stone*) or a bird (*Bold Girls*, *The Straw Chair*). On several occasions in various plays 'a snake', which is traditionally a metaphor for male sexuality, is used to represent a female sexuality, as in e.g. *The Straw Chair*, in Isabel's dreaming of having a snake's skin and swimming in the sea. The blood imagery is, as seen earlier, linked with an act of creation, whether an actual act of giving birth or a symbolic act of writing. The blood imagery is also seen as a representation of women's emotional, intellectual and sexual liberation, e.g. in Lochhead's *Dracula*, where the traditional model of vampire as a Byronic figure is turned into an emanation of the feminine.

In order to show the female protagonists' growing awareness of their identity and the ways in which this identity has been repressed and controlled by male-dominated cultural imperatives, the authors use imagery of mirrors and pictures. On the surface, and in all of the plays where it is used, this imagery represents objectification of women in the male gaze. After establishing the underlying process of commodification of women, the authors continue to subvert it, and tell the respective stories from a female perspective, shifting their female protagonists from a marginalised into the central position in their stories. Such is the use of mirror and pictures imagery in Glover's *Bondagers*, Lochhead's *Blood and Ice*, *Dracula* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, Evaristi's *Commedia*, Macdonald's *The Winter Guest* and Munro's *Fugue* and *Bold Girls*. In Glover's *The Straw Chair*, furthermore, the lack of mirrors is identified as screening off of a female perspective, in the same way that women's language is silenced by patriarchal ideology.

Language is the third issue discussed in this study. As already stated in Chapter One, the objective of this study was to illustrate how the separate spheres model, which is at the core of competitive versus the co-operative language dichotomy could be applied in analysis of discourses in the chosen plays, and to observe conditions in which protagonists use the speech styles associated with the opposite sex.

The findings showed that the general observations, by sociolinguists such as Tannen and Coates, that, in most cases, women and men used different language modes in communication.

Language is indeed closely linked with social differentiation of gender roles, and in this sense men's language can be seen as more competitive, aggressive, and assertive, while women's language is more cooperative, submissive and self-effacing. In other words, men's constant endeavours to be one up in the communicational hierarchy, in both intra- and intergender interaction, are seen as assertive, and given positive attributes, while women's lack of such an endeavour is usually seen as inferior, lacking assertiveness and, therefore, given negative attributes.

However, in cases of intragender interaction between women, the analysis showed that, in the case of most female protagonists in the fifteen plays under scrutiny, one of the speakers felt the need to assume linguistic modes usually associated with men's language, and become controlling, aggressive and competitive in their interaction with other female speakers. This is particularly evident in interaction between Morag and

Fiona in Macdonald's *When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout*, the power-shift in terms of a position in a communicational hierarchy between Lady Rachel and Isabel in Glover's *The Straw Chair*, and continual verbal conflicts between Nora and Cassie in Munro's *Bold Girls*.

Another interesting issue that was touched upon with regard to, especially, Evaristi's and Lochhead's plays is deconstructing man's domination through language by destabilising the meanings the words are given. By doing so, the authors shifted the female-charged words from a powerless (negative) to an empowered (positive) and centralised position in a communicational hierarchy. Furthermore, in most plays under scrutiny, men were portrayed as weaker than their female counterparts, and in some cases (*Bondagers*, *Bold Girls*, *Fugue*) they were physically absent from the plays.

Although the study did not investigate in depth either the structure of the chosen plays or the link between gender and national identities, both were occasionally briefly mentioned in the course of analysis. From the examples provided, the study showed that all five authors interpolated non-naturalistic elements into the more or less naturalistic structures of their plays in order to deconstruct mimetic reality, and to show the falsity of the model of the feminine created and perpetuated by a patriarchal ideology. This deconstruction was administered through fragmenting the temporal structure (with the purpose of fragmenting reality), infusing folk tradition, legends and storytelling into dominant discourses, paraphrasing (and in the case of *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* completely redefining) generally known historical references, and the interpolation of quotations from other authors' works.

Furthermore, action in plays was internalised, in the sense that it was contained in language, rather than presented on-stage. For example, Macdonald's plays lack action to such an extent that they have frequently been compared to impressionist paintings, as already mentioned in Chapter Five.

Although the authors largely concentrated on their investigation into the nature of womanhood and the possibilities of its deconstruction and redefinition, in certain cases gender and national identities were closely linked, such as in Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, which depicted the key events in Scotland and England during the reign of Queens Mary and Elizabeth from a female perspective, and in Evaristi's works which mostly dealt with the everyday life of the Scottish-Italian community on the West Coast of Scotland, and modern preoccupations of women of Scottish-Italian origin.

In conclusion, this study was mainly based on a mixture of content and interaction analysis of different discourses, used to reflect the relationships of both genders in fifteen plays, in its endeavour to unveil women's hidden history and to observe the pluralities of female voices in the plays by five contemporary Scottish women playwrights. Findings indicated that those playwrights used the same devices in examining the realities and preoccupations of women in the past and present Scotland. Hopefully, these findings will open up potential new avenues of exploration of women's writing in Scotland, as well as of the ways in which female identity can be readressed and redefined in the works of contemporary Scottish writers of both genders.

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